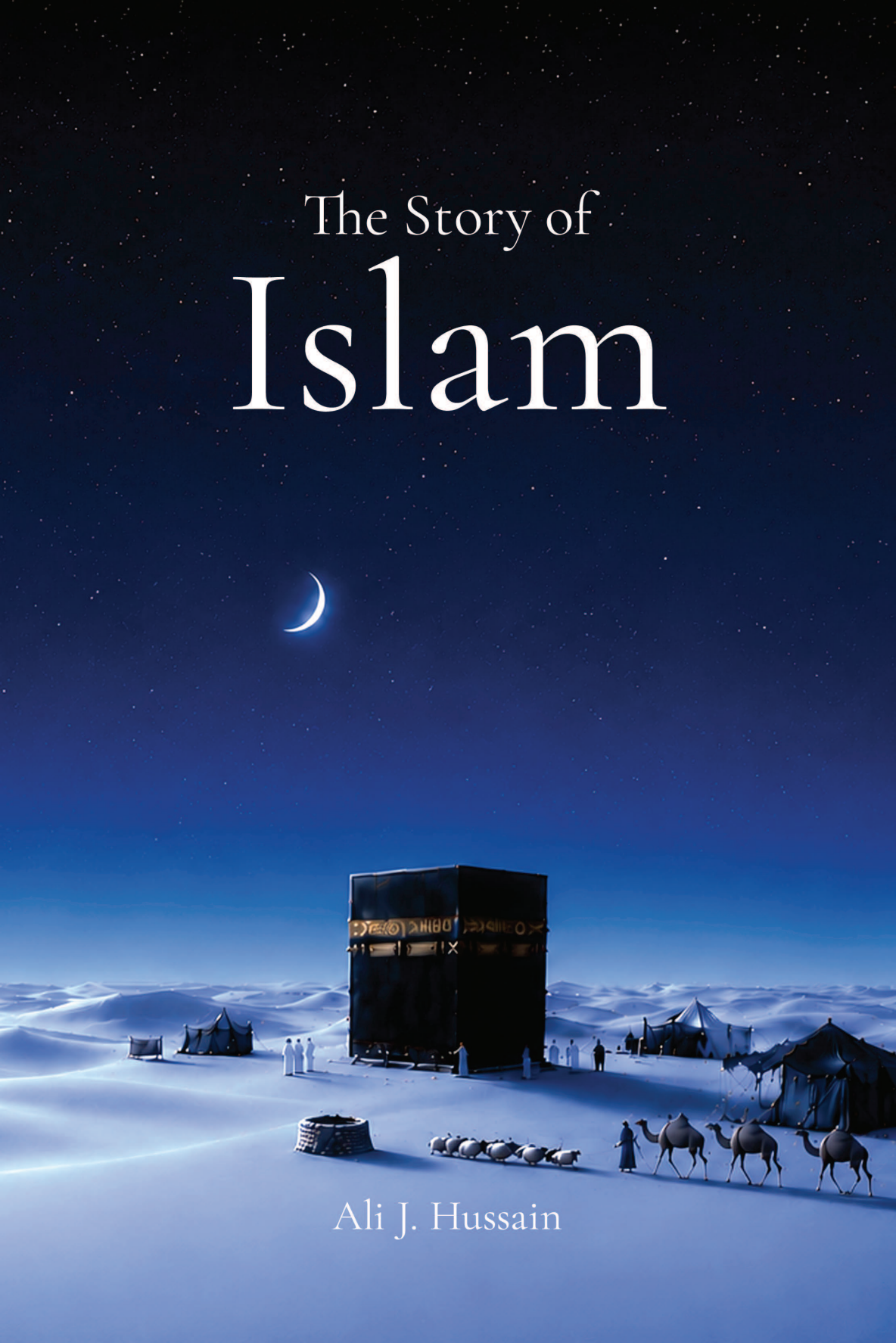
The Story of Islam



Ali J. Hussain

THE STORY OF ISLAM

Muḥammad ﷺ & His Family

By:
Ali J. Hussain

SJL Press
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For the soul of
Fahmī Saʿd Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Rāziq

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﴿ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴾

"Indeed, to God we belong
and indeed, to Him we return."
(Q. al-Baqarah, 2: 156)

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INTRODUCTION

This slim volume is a narrative summary of the history of the rise and fall of *islām*.[1] Those elements capture precisely what is presented here. First, this is a history. It is the history of a movement that changed the world. The leader of that movement, Muḥammad, is one one of the world's most misunderstood individuals, and his family, as a group, share that status. Ironically, they are misunderstood not only by non-Muslims, but even for many who call themselves Muslims and purport to be the believers and heirs of that movement called *islām*.

Second, this is a very condensed summary. The information presented here is gathered from the most well-known classical Islamic sources commonly cited by scholars of Islamic studies, including, the Qur'ān, ḥadīths, akhbār, and literary sources. They are the foundational sources that have been commonly accepted by the majority of Muslim scholars since classical times and still relied upon today, albeit more critically, by modern academic scholars. In my short time on this planet I have come across many people from a great many religious (and irreligious) persuasions, and from many different walks of life, who had questions about this subject and who expressed an interest in learning more. Not everyone has the language skills, scholarly experience, or interest in devoting the time and energy necessary to dive deeply into the classical Arabic sources to grasp all the details of this period in history. I found that what is needed is a summary that is both accurate (according to the classical Islamic sources) and accessible to someone who would like to learn about the rise and fall of Muḥammad's movement but has no intention of devoting the years of study required to become a specialist in the subject. Having spent most of my adult life with this material, I felt it my duty to compose just such a work for precisely such an audience. I have gathered the data from that vast corpus and distilled it into the concentrated summary that is now before the reader.

Citations are generally avoided in this volume. The only citations provided are those to quotations of the Prophet or of his companions. A list of the most important sources is provided at the end. Providing citations everywhere they might be needed would require hundreds of additional pages of endnotes, perhaps even more than the main text of the story itself. That is hardly necessary for the intended audience. It also defeats the

[1] As defined in the next section.

purpose. I encourage the interested reader to investigate the classical sources from which all the information in this summary was gathered. As a bridge to help serious readers in that vein, my forthcoming *The First 50 Years: After the Prophet* is the companion book to this volume. While this volume focuses on telling the story, uninterrupted by references, that one focuses on the references, with only a very brief summary of the story. The two are complimentary, and between the two, the reader should have a solid understanding of the basics of early Islamic history, as well as the references to dig deeper and learn more.

Separating the citations as described above allows the information summarized in this volume to be presented as a seamless narrative. Hence, the title. This is not merely as a condensation of the original material. This is, more than anything, a story. It is the story of that misunderstood prophet and his misunderstood family. And, by its very nature, it is also the story of their enemies. In the original classical Arabic literature, the 'story' appears as a series of disconnected qur'ānic verses, ḥadīth narrations, and akhbār narrations written in a style that is not typically intelligible to the average reader today. With regard to modern publications, most English language scholarly works are written in such a dense manner as to be inaccessible to the average reader. That is often deliberate. There is also a prevailing view that in order for writing to be considered 'scholarly' it must be dispassionate. Dryness and blandness of presentation are often mistaken for accuracy of content. At the other end of the spectrum, most examples of non-scholarly literature on the subject are religious polemical works aimed at proselytising and attracting the reader to the views of one or another of today's modern Islamic community groups. These works are full of passion and zeal, but are, more often than not, historically inaccurate. I am very much opposed to these artificial dichotomies. They are unnatural and illogical.

This story is inherently one of deep, spiritual faith. The repeated confrontations between a faith group drawn magnetically to a prophet inspired by divine vision to create a new world for all humanity, and the depraved violence directed towards this group of believers by enemies motivated by base greed, hunger for power, and insatiable lust for wealth, are impossible to describe accurately without capturing the emotions driving the narrative. Telling the story of people motivated by intense love, deep hate, empathic pity, crass apathy, heartbreak, yearning, profound faith and readiness for martyrdom, lust for gold and fear of death, without portraying

to the reader the visceral emotions that drove these people to do what they did, fails to capture the essense of the story and does the reader a great disservice. What is very much needed, and what, to the best of my knowledge, no one has yet produced, is something that embraces the best of both types: A short summary that maintains historical accuracy from an Islamic scholarly perspective, and presents the material in a single, accessible narrative that captures the intense emotions of different groups of people willing to fight, kill, and die for the things that they fought, killed, and died for, without succumbing to the biases of the various sects that evolved later, in the ceturies after the historical period being described.

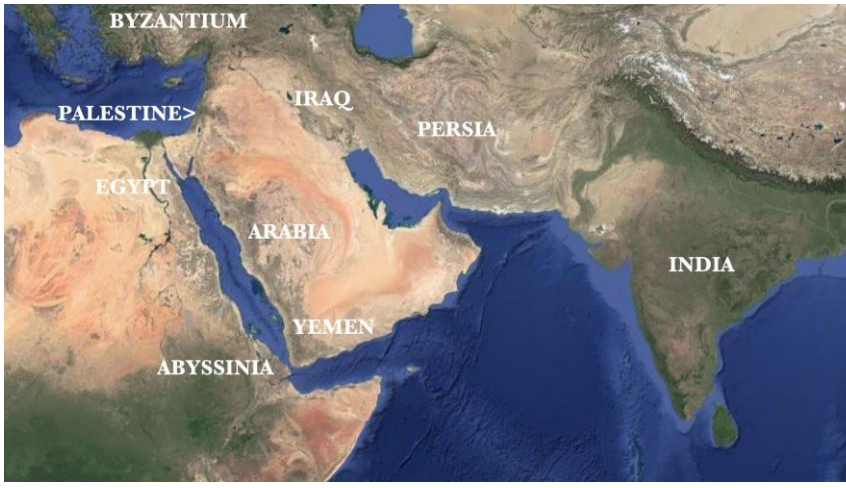
I am the first to admit that composing such a work is a daunting task. One might even say that it is impossible. The following is nothing more than one humble servant's attempt at the impossible. As with all of my works, I see this as a small contribution towards making the world a better place. It is my hope that it will inspire you, the reader, to learn more about this aspect of human history. If I have succeeded in telling this story well, some parts will bring us joy, other parts will bring us to tears, and by the end, I hope we will have learned something that might help us to become better human beings.

Ali J. Hussain
Chicago, 1447/2025

THE WORD '*ISLĀM*'

While other Arabic terms presented here are translated into English, the word '*islām*' and its derivatives (*muslim*, etc.) are not. [2] That is because the meaning of the word, as it is used in the Qur'ān, is very different from its meaning today. The word today encompasses over fourteen centuries of developments in religious law, jurisprudence, exegesis, philosophy, and countless other aspects defining the faith. None of these developments existed at the time of the qur'ānic revelation and any application of modern usage to a qur'ānic text dated centuries earlier is back-projection. A close look at the Qur'ān itself reveals that the word '*islām*" is never used to refer to the religion we now know as Islam, nor does the Qur'ān ever address those who followed Muḥammad as '*muslim*s.' When examining how the word '*islām*' is used in the Qur'ān, we can see that it refers to a sort of ancient proto-monotheistic belief which, according to the Qur'ān, is the pure, ancient belief in *the* One God, the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, the faith that was naturally adopted by all of God's prophets millennia before Muḥammad was born. In fact, according to the Qur'ān, the Prophet Muḥammad never aimed to establish a new religion at all. He was, like all the other prophets before him, a reformer calling for people to shun pagan idol-worship and to *return* to the ancient pure faith of Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, Moses, Jesus and others: belief in the One, Almighty God. The Qur'ān calls that ancient faith *islām*.

[2] This section was taken from my Prayers of the Prophets (Chicago: SJL Press, 2024), with some modification for our purposes here.



Regions around Arabia at the Time of Muḥammad

Capitals, Other Cities, and Battle Sites

I

THE ONE GOD

IBRĀHĪM (ABRAHAM)

THE FRIEND OF GOD

Abraham is arguably the most important prophet mentioned in the Qurʾān. To many who are unfamiliar with the Qurʾān, it often comes as a great surprise when they discover that Abraham is mentioned more frequently in the Qurʾān than is Muḥammad. Not only that, but, according to the Qurʾān, Abraham (not Muḥammad) was the central figure who established the devotional rituals of *islām*. Muḥammad, by contrast, was merely a messenger sent by the Lord to remind a forgetful people who had strayed far from the teachings of Abraham.

Abraham was born in ancient Mesopotamia in a city-state named Ur, which was at the mouth of the Euphrates River on the coast of the Persian Gulf. Most scholars believe the site of ancient Ur is currently at Tall al-Muqayyar, about 10 miles southwest of the modern city of Nāṣirīyah in southern ʿIrāq. According to the Qurʾān, Abraham's faith in God began when he was just a youth. Interestingly, it was based on logical reasoning. Abraham is described as yearning for Truth, and seeking a higher power. At a time when every nation, every tribe, and sometimes, every household had their own gods and made idols and figurines to represent them, Abraham became disillusioned with the notion that a chunk of carved wood or stone or forged metal could be the All-powerful, All-seeing, All-knowing Creator of the entire universe! He tested some of the beliefs of the pagans around him. One night, he considered worshiping a bright star, as star-worshipers did, but when the star disappeared, he was not pleased. He considered worshiping the moon as moon-worshipers did, but later that night the moon also set, and he was dissatisfied. Then when he saw the sun rising, he considered doing as the Sun-worshipers did, but at the end of the day, the sun set and Abraham was disappointed (Q, al-Anʿām, 6:76-78).

The Qurʾān describes multiple occasions when Abraham questioned his father and his people as to why they were worshipping idol statues (e.g., Q, al-Anʿām, 6:74). Abraham asked them, "Do they hear you when you call to them? Or do they benefit you or harm you in any way?" (Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:72-73). The people answered that they were just worshiping the same way that their forefathers did before them. Then Abraham said to them, "Don't you see what you are worshiping? You and your forefathers before you? They are enemies to me and to the Lord of the worlds. The One who

created me and who guides me, the One who feeds me and quenches my thirst, and when I become sick, He heals me, and the One who makes me to die and to live, and the One who, I hope, will forgive my faults on the Day of Judgement" (Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26:75-82). Then the young Abraham called to the Lord, saying, "My Lord, grant me wisdom and join me with the righteous, and make me spoken of honorably among later generations" (Q, al-Shuʿarāʾ, 26: 83-87).

Abraham's conflicted relationship with his pagan idol-worshipping father is a recurring theme in the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān highlights Abraham's pain at his inability to save his beloved father from the fires of hell, but at the same time being unable to accept his father's insistence that the worship of their people's idols is legitimate. This tension is all the more powerful when considering that the Qurʾān emphasizes repeatedly the importance of obeying one's parents. In fact, the Qurʾān is so emphatic on that point that the only exception that God allows for disobeying our parents is if they force us to believe in gods other than God (Q, Luqmān, 31:15).

Despite Abraham's best efforts, he was unable to convince his father of the truth that only God was worthy of worship. He and a small group of believers eventually separated from their people and homeland. Abraham told his father that he (Abraham) would ask God's forgiveness for him, but that he (Abraham) was unable to protect his father from God's wrath as long as Abraham's father continued to worship idols (Q, al-Mumtaḥanah, 60:4). Abraham then called to his Lord again (Q, al-Mumtaḥanah, 60:4-5), before leaving his father and his idol-worshipping people. He traveled the lands, following the commands of the Lord and preaching the faith of One God. As he got older, he called unto the Lord and requested a child, saying, "My Lord, grant me [a child who will be] from among the righteous" (Q, al-Ṣāffāt, 37: 100).

The Lord heard Abraham's prayer and granted him a righteous son, who was named Ishmael. As in the Old Testament, Abraham traveled the lands building altars to the Lord (e.g., Genesis 12:7-8 and 13:15). According to the Qurʾān, the first altar to the One God that Abraham built was in the valley described in the Old Testament (Genesis 16 and 17), where Ishmael's mother, Hagar, having run out of food and water in the middle of the desert valley, began to despair of witnessing the death of her baby. She set the baby Ishmael down on the barren sands, raised her voice to the heavens, and cried (Genesis 12:16). An angel of the Lord appeared to her and comforted her, while a spring of fresh water appeared where the boy sat.

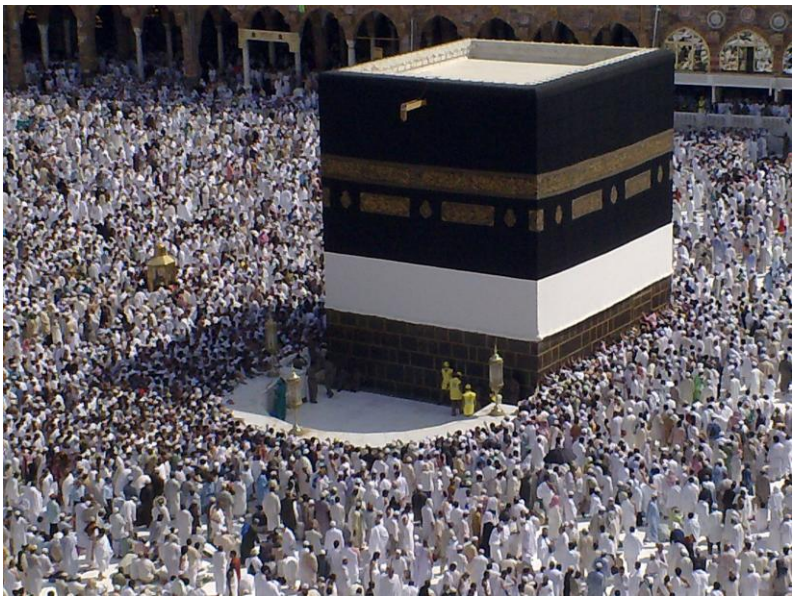
The Hebrew word '*bakah*' means 'to weep, to cry.' In Arabic, the word for "she cried" is '*bakat*.' The ancient name for this place was 'Bakkah' (Q, Āl 'Imrān, 3:96). With the passage of time, the '*b*' came to be pronounced '*m*' and 'Bakkah' eventually came to be called 'Makkah' (in English, Mecca).

According to the Qur'ān, God commanded Abraham to build the first holy House of God in that desert valley, next to the holy well of water that sprang miraculously beneath the baby Ishmael. Abraham began to build this first altar to the One God, and as Ishmael grew, the boy began to help his father build the simple square structure. As they built the first holy House of God in the uninhabited desert valley, Abraham called unto the Lord and said, "My Lord, make this a peaceful land and bless its people with the fruits [of the Earth] for whoever believes in God and in the Last Day. Our Lord, accept this from us. Indeed, You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Our Lord, make [the two of us] *muslim*s to You, and from among our descendants a nation of *muslim*s to You and show us our ritual devotions and accept our repentance, indeed You are the Most Accepting of Repentance, the Most Merciful. Our Lord, send to them a messenger from among them who recites to them Your signs and teaches them the book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Dear, the Wise" (Q, al-Baqarah, 2: 126-129).

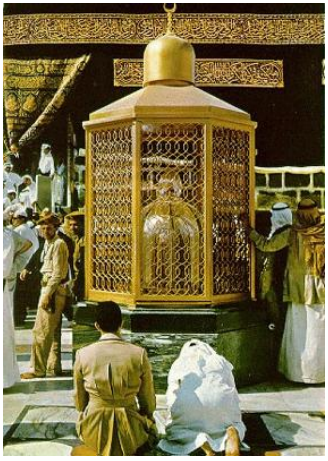
On another occasion, Abraham again prayed and called unto the Lord, saying, "My Lord, make this a peaceful land and keep me and my children away from the worship of idols. My Lord, they (the idols) have led astray many from among the people, so whoever follows me, then he is from me, and whoever is against me, then You are the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful. My Lord, I have settled from among my family in a barren desert valley, next to Your Holy House, my Lord, so that they may perform the prayer, so make the hearts of people incline towards them, and bless them with fruits [of the Earth] so that they may be thankful. Our Lord, indeed, You know what we keep hidden and what we make public, and there is nothing that is hidden from God, neither on Earth nor in the heavens. All praise is due to the Lord who has blessed me … Indeed, my Lord hears all prayers. My Lord, make me one who performs [ritual] prayers, and also my descendants, My Lord, accept my invocation. My lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers on the Day of Reckoning" (Q, Ibrāhīm, 14: 35-41).

The first altar to the One God was built by Abraham with the help of his son, Ishmael and stood as a simple, square structure, without any

decoration or adornment, near the well that God sprang miraculously from the desert sands. People passing by on routes through the desert began to detour towards the first holy House of God and the nearby spring, both to worship the One God of Abraham and to drink from the holy spring. Some stayed, and a small village developed. When Abraham's wife Hagar died, she was buried near the shrine, and when Ishmael died, he was buried next to his mother. The square shrine has stood on the same spot since the time of Abraham and has been restored and rebuilt many times since Abraham and Ishmael first established the original foundations. Jews, Christians, and others who believed in the One God of Abraham visited the shrine and prayed there for thousands of years before Islam. Since the time of Muḥammad, Muslims have faced in the direction of this, the very first altar built to the Lord, every day during their prayers. Muslims are commanded to visit the shrine at least once in their lifetimes (if they are physically and financially able) to perform the Ḥajj pilgrimage, to perform the rituals commanded to Abraham. The well, now called Zamzam, still produces water. It quenches the thirst of pilgrims visiting the shrine to this day.



The Kaʿbah shrine. The cube structure has been rebuilt on the same site many times since first built by Abraham and Ishmael. The marble semi-circle in the foreground is the *Ḥijr Ismāʿīl*, where Ishmael and his mother Hajar are buried. To the left is a small structure called the *Maqām Ibrāhīm*, which covers a small boulder used by Abraham and Ishmael as a step to reach higher as they were building the shrine. Below is a close-up of the *Maqām Ibrāhīm*.



1

MUḤAMMAD ﷺ, THE MESSENGER OF GOD

Thousands of years after Abraham, among his descendants who settled in Makkah, a boy was born. His father was named ʻAbd Allāh (servant of God) and his mother's name was Āminah (peaceful, calm, tranquil). They named the boy Muḥammad, which means "highly praised" or "one who is praised highly." His father died before the boy was born, and the infant was nursed by his single, widowed mother. When the boy was 6 years old, his mother also died. Muḥammad was orphaned of both parents. His Grandfather took him in and raised him as one of his own beloved children.

In the years since Abraham and Ishmael built the first shrine to the Lord, the uninhabited desert valley became a small settlement, then, over the centuries, became a small village, then centuries later, became a small town. By the time Muḥammad was born, it was an established town and well-known for its shrine and as a source of water. It was visited by pilgrims from near and far. Because of the water, it became a popular rest stop for passing caravans crossing the harsh dry desert. Because of the holy shrine, the area was considered a sanctuary and no fighting was allowed, so even warring tribes or enemies could both be there without worry of attack. All these things together made the town a perfect place for traders looking to sell, and pilgrims and other travelers looking to buy.

In the centuries before Muḥammad's birth, wars raged between the two superpowers of the time. The Byzantine Empire in the northwest and the Sasanian Empire in the northeast fought war after war, ravaging the lands in between them. The dangerous situation made many merchants look for alternative routes to transport their goods, and more and more took a detour through the southern desert to avoid the battlefields between the two great empires. As more and more merchants went through the desert, Makkah became more and more important as a place to rest and a safe

haven for commerce. Within only a few generations, a wealthy business class developed that monopolized the economy and became richer and richer, while others in Makkah became poorer and poorer. Muḥammad grew up watching this happening before his very eyes. He saw the powerful take advantage of the weak. He saw the wealthy use loans with interest to take advantage of the poor. He saw slave traders take advantage of slaves. He saw adults taking advantage of orphaned children. He saw the rich and powerful of Makkah monopolizing the pilgrimage and taking advantage of the pilgrims. He saw the very descendants of Abraham taking advantage of the holy House of God that Abraham built.

Over the generations since Abraham built the first House of God so that people would worship the One Lord, the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, people had forgotten Abraham's original message. By the time Muḥammad was born thousands of years later, the people in Arabia had already devolved back to idol-worship. Each tribe, each town, and sometimes even each family or household, had their favorite stone or wooden idol statues that they worshiped. The local tribes even set up statues in the sacred sanctuary at Makkah, surrounding the holy shrine that Abraham built, with the very types of wooden and stone idols that Abraham preached against! The powerful merchants of Makkah who monopolized the pilgrimage were happy to profit from that blasphemous mix of pagan gods with the God of Abraham. This vexed Muḥammad.

As he grew into a young man, Muḥammad developed a reputation for honesty. People in Makkah who hated each other and distrusted each other, all respected Muḥammad and chose him to mediate their disputes. He was neither rich nor poor, but he was humble, lived modestly, and dealt with everyone fairly, without discrimination. He was deeply troubled by injustice. His heart sank whenever when he walked the streets of Makkah and saw a slave being beaten, or an orphan child whose inheritance was stolen, or a hungry and homeless beggar being scorned by someone who ate more in a single meal than the beggar had eaten for days. He felt the unbearable pain of witnessing his people losing their way.

He prayed the prayers of Abraham and honored the sacred shrine that Abraham built, trying his best to ignore the idols that defiled God's holy sanctuary. An older widow named Khadījah who also worshiped the God of Abraham took notice of Muḥammad's sincerity and honesty. She offered to hire him to manage some business transactions for her. Muḥammad agreed. During his travels outside Makkah to trade at provincial capitals of the

neighboring empires, he saw the crumbling ruins of former civilizations. He saw many peoples, heard many languages, witnessed the symbols and rituals of many religion He saw the trappings of empire, the bureaucracy, the tax collectors, the corruption. His assigned business dealings were successful and, eventually, Khadījah proposed that they get married. Muḥammad agreed, and he learned the love of a good woman. They continued being partners, in both business and in life, and raised several daughters together.

When he was a young, Muḥammad used to explore the area around his hometown. He climbed the mountains surrounding the valley on all sides. On one mountaintop he found a small space between some of the boulders. He crawled inside. There was a crevice in the rocks that gave a clear view of the House of God in the far distance. It became his favorite quiet place. Even decades later, as a 40 year old father of four, he would walk and climb for hours to reach his private cave and escape the hustle and noise and heat of Makkah. At the top of the mountain he would sit in the cool, quiet darkness, staring in silence at the holy House of God and at the pilgrims, so far away, smaller than ants. Sometimes he stayed there for days at a time.

His heart ached for God. He fasted to purify his body. He meditated to purify his soul. He contemplated the creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and all that is between them. He marvelled at the stars in the sky, the movement of the sun, and the stages of the moon. At the creation of humans, the animals on the land, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea. He was in awe as he watched the dry desert bloom suddently into a field of blossoming flowers after a brief rainstorm, and just as quickly return to a barren landscape scorched by the sun. Once the thirsty earth drank her fill, hot winds spread the dry seeds to new cracks and crevices, waiting for the next year's rains to spring back to life. He pondered birth, death, and rebirth. His parents', his own, his childrens'. The fate of all Humanity. He felt the weight of time. Centuries in a heartbeat. Millenia in the blink of an eye. Creation and the end of the world in a single breath. He yearned for the Divine.

Then, one day, his call was answered. He was in his cave when an angel appeared. The angel said that he was Gabriel. He said that he was sent by God to relay a message, God's final message to the world, and that God has chosen Muḥammad to deliver this message. It was the same message that God had chosen Jesus to deliver, and Moses to deliver, and many others. It was the same message that God commanded Abraham to deliver: there are no other gods except the *One* God. Like those before him, Muḥammad was

commanded to deliver God's message to warn people before the coming of the Last Day. God was powerful and could destroy the unbelievers right away, but He was also a God of justice and mercy, and He chose to give humankind one final warning before this world came to an end.

The message was imprinted onto Muḥammad's heart, and he began to preach it. He began first with his family, then those close to him for a few years, before finally going public. Gabriel visited again and again, each time delivering more of God's words. Muḥammad memorized them and shared them with the world. Only a few listened. Like the messengers before him, people laughed at him. He was mocked and ridiculed. Just like the messengers before him, Muḥammad's call to the one true God and His message of justice and equality attracted slaves, the poor, and the oppressed. At first, those who mocked Muḥammad used this fact as evidence that his message was wrong: the only people who actually listened to him were the lowest of the low of Makkah's society. But little by little, word began to spread. More and more people began to listen. Gabriel continued to visit Muḥammad and deliver God's words to him. These included more of God's commandments to help the poor, to take care of the orphans, and to treat all people fairly.

As the number of Muḥammad's followers grew, the rich and powerful of Makkah came to see the message as a threat. The same Muḥammad that just a short while earlier, all the people of Makkah respected and considered to be the most honest among them, now they called him a liar. They said he was not a messenger and there was no message. They called him crazy. They warned people not to listen to the insane preacher. They said he was delusional, that he hallucinated, that he was possessed. People from outside Makkah, who came for the markets or for the pilgrimage, heard him preaching. Some became interested and spread word of the message back to their hometowns. The elite of Makkah became even more concerned. They pressured Muḥammad's family to make him stop. His family defended him. Even his relatives who did not believe in his message continued to protect him. His grandfather who raised him ever since he was an orphaned child, did not publicly follow Muḥammad's religion, but he never gave up protecting him. The number of believers continued to grow. The Makkan elite decided to bribe Muḥammad. They offered to give him whatever he wanted, just to stop preaching the message of the One God. They offered him gold and riches, they offered him the most beautiful women, they offered to make him the king of Makkah. All he had to do was to stop

preaching the message of One God. He answered them: even if they gave him the sun in his right hand and the moon in his left, he still would not stop preaching the message that God had commanded him to preach. Despite all the efforts to silence him, more and more people began to believe in the message, both in Makkah, and in nearby towns in Arabia.

When nothing seemed to work, the pagans got together and decided to put pressure on the believers by a boycott. They conspired to not buy anything from the believers who sold anything, not to sell anything to the beleivers who wanted to buy anything, not to participate in any way with believers who wanted or needed anything. No one was allowed to meet with, talk with, share food or drink with, be friends with, marry, divorce, buy from, or sell to, any believers. Many believers were starved and malnourished. The believers who had food shared with those who didn't, but it was never enough. Muḥammad's youngest daughter, Fāṭimah, was a young girl at the time, and the vitamin deficiencies and malnutrition that she suffered during this boycott affected her health to the end of her short life. But the belivers did not give up their belief.

Then the elite of Makkah began their threats. If Muḥammad did not stop, they would punish his family. If he did not stop, they would brutalize his followers. They cursed him as he passed in the streets of Makkah. They threw slop and garbage at him. When he was bowing in prayer at the sanctuary, they poured on him the innards of slaughtered animals, intestines, bladders, and bloody manure. Believers who recited the words of God were beaten, even in the holy sanctuary where violence was forbidden. In Arabia's tribal society, Muḥammad's life was protected because, even though they were rich and powerful, the elite of Makkah did not want to start a blood-feud with Muḥammad's family. They also did not want any tribal revenge wars with each other. To avoid retaliation from other tribes, the pagans decided that the powerful in each tribe would target the believers in their own tribes.

But there was nothing to stop anyone from violence against those who had no tribal protection. Since many of the earliest among the believers were slaves, the slaveowners would beat the believing slaves even worse than before, even torturing them to make them give up their faith. The believers who had money tried to buy these tortured slaves to set them free, but the cruel owners would refuse the money, just to make an example of the slaves for believing. The brutal slave masters punished them severely and publicly so that all the other slaves saw what would happen if any of them thought of

converting to belief in only the One God of Abraham. The owner of an African slave named Bilāl tied him up on the ground, on his back, had a boulder lifted onto his chest, and refused to take it off until Bilāl renounced his faith. Though his ribs cracked and he could hardly breathe, Bilāl kept repeating, in pained whimpers, "One God… One God… One God…" One woman was tortured for her belief by tying each of her arms and legs to a camel, and having the four camels pull in opposite directions. Despite all the pain, she still refused to give up her faith until the very end. The cruel pagans of Makkah whipped all four camels to run and she screamed in pain as her limbs were ripped from her body and she bled to death. The cruelty of the pagans towards the believers was merciless.

The persecution was unbearable. A group of believers escaped across the sea to Africa, to the kingdom of Axum, in what is nowadays Ethiopia. It was a Christian kingdom and they had a king who was wise and just. When the pagans of Makkah heard of the migration, they sent emissaries to the king with gifts of the finest of Makkah's trade goods. They told the king that the migrants were troublemakers and criminals and asked him to hand them over to be taken back to Makkah for their punishment. The king ordered the migrants to come to the palace. He asked for their side of the story. They told the truth: that the rich and powerful pagans of Makkah were starving and torturing and killing them just because they believed in the One God. The king asked them to explain about their God. One of the believers offered, instead of explaining in his own words, to recite what was revealed by God to Muḥammad. He recited aloud the verses from the Qur'ān from the chapter "Maryam," about Mary and the immaculate conception of Jesus (Q, Maryam, 19: 16-34). The king was moved to tears and said, "That is exactly what *we* believe!" He became furious with the Makkan pagans who tried to bribe him with their finest gifts. He warned them what he would do if they ever harmed any of these believers that were in his kingdom under his protection, and he threw the pagan Makkans out of his palace. The pagans returned home to Makkah even more angry at Muḥammad and his followers, knowing that now there was a safe haven for them in the neighboring Christian kingdom. Instead of being eliminated, Muḥammad's community of believers was growing.

Finally, the pagans of Makkah decided they could take no more. They decided to kill Muḥammad. To avoid any blood-feuds, they assigned one man from each tribe to all gather together, go to Muḥammad's house in the middle of the night, and all stab their swords into him at the same time.

That way, all the tribes would be equally responsible, no one tribe could seek revenge from any of the others, and Muḥammad's family could not go to war against all of the other tribes. God sent Gabriel to tell Muḥammad of the plan. Muḥammad slipped out of his house in the night and escaped Makkah before the assassins arrived. He traveled through the desert until he reached a town called Yathrib (later known as Madīnah, short for *Madīnat al-nabī*, the City of the Prophet).

There, some people who learned of his reputation for honesty and fairness in Makkah invited him to mediate between the tribes of Yathrib, who had been disputing among themselves. Muḥammad got the tribes together and everyone came to an agreement. Everyone agreed to put aside their tribal differences and stick together with everyone else in Madīnah. They even agreed not to discriminate on religion. Everyone was free to believe whatever they wanted as long as they were loyal to Madīnah. The two Jewish tribes of Madīnah were equal with everyone else, and even the pagan idol-worshipers of Madīnah were equal with everyone else, as long as they didn't ally with the pagans of Makkah or any other pagans against Madīnah. Everyone agreed to protect Madīnah if anyone ever attacked Madīnah. They agreed to make Muḥammad lead the army to defend Madīnah. They wrote it down and called it the 'Constitution of Madīnah.'

Now that there was a safe place for them, the beleivers from Makkah began to migrate to Madīnah. Many of the migrants had nothing. They had no place to live. They left their homes in Makkah with nothing but what they could carry. Many had only the clothes on their backs. Muḥammad made a brotherhood in Madīnah, pairing up each local believer from Madīnah with a migrant who escaped the cruel persecution in Makkah. The believers who escaped Makkah came to be called the *Muhājirūn* (Emigrants) and the local Madīnese believers came to be called the *Anṣār* (Helpers.)

Many of those who escaped Makkah left everything behind. The same brutal Makkan pagans who persecuted, tortured, and killed the believers now confiscated the homes and property of those who escaped to safety in Madīnah. One of the wealthiest pagans of Makkah, leaders of the opposition to Muḥammad's message, and masterminds of the barbaric persecution of the peaceful believers was known as Abū Sufyān. Madīnah was on the trade route between Makkah and Syria. Two years after the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madīnah [2 AH] When news reached Madīnah that Abū Sufyān was leading a caravan of the same pagan Makkans who confiscated and stole the property of the believers,

Muḥammad led a group of the believers to attack the caravan and confiscate the goods. Abū Sufyān sent a messenger to Makkah to gather reinforcements. Muḥammad ordered that no one be prevented from water, even if they were enemy troops in battle. He ordered that prisoners not be killed or mistreated and that the bodies of the fallen not be mutilated or mistreated in any way. The two armies met at a place called Badr and the battle that ensued came to be called the Battle of Badr. The believers gained the upper hand and won the battle. One of the Makkans fighting in the pagan army was Bilāl's former owner. When Bilāl saw him, he and a group of believers became so furious that they all attacked the brutal slave master and killed him. One of Abū Sufyān's sons was killed in the battle, and another was taken prisoner. In those days, after battles, prisoners of war were held for ransom temporarily, until their families paid for an exchange, then the prisoners were returned to their families. Abū Sufyān was so greedy that he chose to keep his money instead of paying to get his son back. Some of the pagan prisoners were poor and their families couldn't afford to pay anything. Muḥammad was merciful and ordered those prisoners from poor families to be released without any payment, as long as they promised never to attack Madīnah again.

The defeated pagan army retreated back to Makkah humiliated and angry. They immediately started planning their revenge. In the meantime, they started taking detours around Madīnah for their trade caravans. But the Prophet wouldn't let them get away with the injustice. Not after the horrible things they did to the believers when the believers were still in Makkah. Not after starving, torturing, and killing the believers. Not after forcing them to run away from their homes, then stealing their homes and all their property. Abū Sufyān led another caravan loaded with silver, and again the Madīnese army raided it. Abū Sufyān and the other Makkans escaped, but only by leaving the heavy silver behind.

[3 AH] Almost a year after the Battle of Badr, the pagans of Makkah gathered together money and gave it to Abū Sufyān to fund a war against Madīnah. Some of the Makkan prisoners from the year before, who were freed by the Prophet on condition that they promised to never attack Madīnah again, broke their promise and joined the Makkan army attacking Madīnah. Muḥammad gathered troops from among the believers to defend Madīnah from the pagans' attack. The two armies met at a mountain just north of Madīnah called Mount Uḥud. The attack came to be known as the Battle of Uḥud. The Prophet stationed some Madīnese on the mountain

and ordered them stay there no matter what, until he tells them they are relieved from their posts.

The Makkan pagan army brought with them some of their women to cheer them on. Muḥammad ordered the army of the believers that no women should be harmed. He reminded them not to kill prisoners who lay down their arms in surrender and not to disrespect the bodies of those fallen in battle. When the Makkans attacked, the Madīnese quickly gained the upper hand and the Makkan army ran away. The people stationed on the mountain all rushed down to celebrate, ignoring the Prophet's command. The Makkan pagans went around the mountain and came back from the other side, attacking the believers from behind. The army was caught by surprize and many believers were killed. A pagan threw a rock that hit Muḥammad, bloodied his face, and broke his tooth. He fell, and the pagans ganged up to finish him off. Believers surrounded him, shielding him, and got cut down by swords, one after another, taking the blows to protect Muḥammad. The pagans shot a barrage of arrows to kill the Prophet and more believers rushed to protect him. Even unarmed and defenseless, they stood in front of him as human shields, and took the enemies' arrows, sacrificing themselves to protect the Messenger of God. When one fell, riddled with arrows, another stood in his place.

One of the women cheering on the pagan army was Hind, the wife of Abū Sufyān. Before the battle, she devised an assassination. She hired a slave to target Muḥammad's favorite uncle, Ḥamzah, who was a brave warrior and protected the Prophet from the very beginning in Makkah. Ḥamzah's reputation in Makkah was like a lion. No one's bow was stronger and no one's sword was sharper. He never returned from a hunt empty handed. There was no one more feared by the pagans of Makkah than Ḥamzah. His very existence protected Muḥammad. At the Battle of Uḥud, while Ḥamzah was busy fighting, the assassin snuck up behind Ḥamzah. While Ḥamzah was busy fighting with pagans in front of him, the assassin behind him inched closer and closer, then hurled a spear straight into Ḥamzah's back. The Prophet's beloved uncle fell. As the believers retreated, Hind then went to Ḥamzah's corpse, cut his belly open, pulled out his insides, and cannibalized his liver. With the bloody juices from Ḥamzah's liver dripping from her mouth, she mutilated the rest of the body. She cut off the fingers and toes, ears and nose, and strung them into a necklace that she wore around her neck. She danced and clapped and sang that the feared 'Lion' who protected Muḥammad was dead. Her husband, Abū

Sufyān, came and also chopped at the mutilated corpse even more, until someone saw him and mocked him for claiming to be an honorable chief of his tribe. Then the pagan army gathered to return to Makkah to celebrate.

The believers were devastated. Many died. The Prophet kept asking about his beloved uncle. No one had the heart to tell him the horrible things that Hind and Abū Sufyān did to the corpse. Over and over again, he kept asking to see the body, but it was so mutilated that the believers couldn't bring themselves to allow the Prophet to see it. When he finally saw what the barbaric pagans of Makkah had done, he was heartbroken. Some believers wanted to take the bodies of their relatives back to Madīnah for burial, but the Prophet ordered that the deceased should be buried there at the base of Mount Uḥud. After the burials, the survivors returned to Madīnah, despondent.

It was a sad day for the believers. Many husbands and fathers were killed in the battle. Many children were orphaned. Many women were widowed. Many suffered not only the loss of their loved ones, but the loss of the family's only breadwinner. The city was full of families with no way to survive. God sent Gabriel to reveal to the Prophet that the surviving believers could take additional wives to provide for the widows whose husbands were killed and the orphans whose fathers were killed in the battle. Those who were able to, supported those were left all alone. For the believers, the grief was deep and painful.

Some of the pagan tribes around Arabia, seeing the believers in Madīnah weakened and the pagans of Makkah victorious, decided to needle the believers. They asked the Prophet to send some believers from Madīnah to preach the new faith to the pagan tribes in the other towns. But when the Prophet sent some believers to preach there, the locals attacked them and killed them. Muḥammad realized that the idol-worshiping pagans from the surrounding areas were deceitful. He arranged the army of Madīnah to raid nearby towns without any fighting, just as a show of strength, so that they learned what could happen to them if they kept inviting believers to preach and then murdering the invited guests. After an incident with one tribe, Muḥammad wanted to ask one of the Jewish tribes of Madinah for help, since that tribe of Madīnese Jews was allies with the other tribe outside Madīnah. They sent word to Muḥammad that they would be happy to help, but secretly planned to kill Muḥammad when he came to discuss it in person. The believers learned of the trick and gathered to attack the conspiring tribe. Realizing that their deception was discovered, the tribe

tried to negotiate with the Prophet for mercy. Muḥammad agreed to spare their lives. He reminded them of what they agreed to in the Constitution of Madīnah. He allowed them to take their property and leave the city. They made a big show and left with much fanfare, with a musical band playing, celebrating their success in fooling the Prophet and getting away with it. They mocked and humiliated the believers as they left Madīnah. Muḥammad distributed their empty houses to the poor and homeless of Madīnah. [In 4 AH] A year after the devastation of the Battle of Uḥud, Abū Sufyān again gathered the pagans of Makkah to attack Madīnah. The aim was to wipe out the Muḥammad and the believers once and for all. But as soon as the army reached the outskirts of Makkah, they complained about the heat and the drought. They said "there are no herbs and no milk this year," and they turned back to the comfort of their homes. Later, they were mocked for being warriors only when it was convenient. People called them the 'pudding warriors.'

Another year passed and the believers of Madīnah continued to recover from their grief. They tried to rebuild their lives. In the fifth year after the mijration [5 AH] the remaining Jewish tribes of Madīnah secretly contacted the pagans of Makkah and instigated them to attack Madīnah. At the same time, they also contacted some of the other pagan idol-worshiping tribes in Arabia and instigated them also to attack Madīnah. The pagans of Makkah and the other pagan tribes decided to join forces and attack Madīnah together. The news reached Muḥammad and he conferred with the believers. They decided to dig a defensive trench around the city to help protect Madīnah from the armies that were about to attack. The believers all began digging. The Jewish tribes stayed in their houses in their own area of the city. By the time the armies reached Madinah, the trench was finished. This confrontation came to be called 'the Battle of the Trench.' The trench was wide enough that horses were not able to jump across, and it was deep enough that any soldier on foot couldn't cross without having to climb down into it and be exposed to danger. The defenders held their line. Every time the pagans tried to attack, they were stopped at the trench, suffered casualties, and turned back. The attackers gathered at their camps and didn't know what else to do. They decided to just stay and lay seige to Madīnah, not allowing anyone to leave or enter, until the defenders in the city gave up.

Inside, the believers were frightened. They had no way to escape, and the Jewish tribes inside the city who instigated the war were allied with the

attackers surrounding the city. The believers were afraid even to walk the streets. The seige continued day after day. There were some minor skirmishes around the trench, but the defensive line held. Week after week passed. Then, after almost a month, the weather changed. The temperature dropped. Harsh winds began to blow. Abu Sufyan, the wealthy leader of the pagan idol-worshipers of Makkah, was used to fine silks and comfortable bedding and being pampered by slaves who did everything for him. He couldn't take camping in a tent in the desert any more. He gave up and decided to return to Makkah. The other Makkans followed him. The other pagan tribes who had joined the attack on Madīnah also broke camp and returned to their tribal lands. Madinah was finally safe from attack by the outsiders.

But the the traitorous tribe inside Madīnah, who instigated the war in the first place, was still there. God sent Gabriel to command Muḥammad to deal with them. The believers surrounded the Jewish tribe that betrayed their agreement to the Constitution of Madīnah. Five years earlier, they had agreed that they would not help the enemies of Madīnah if the city ever came under attack. Now, not only did they help the attackers, but they actually instigated multiple outside tribes to war against Madīnah. The believers surrounded the tribe and held the area under seige. After about twenty days, there was a negotiation, and the tribe decided to surrender. They requested the same treatment as the previous tribe of Jews, who were allowed to leave Madīnah. That tribe left in celebration, singing and dancing, mocking the Prophet and the believers. This time, the Prophet offered to allow one of their own tribe, a Jew who had converted and became a believer, to decide their fate. They agreed. After some deliberation, the mediator decided that the adult male traitors of his tribe must be executed, but only the men. The women and children were spared.

Slowly but surely, the community of believers in Madīnah began to recover from the devastating attacks against it, both from outside and from inside. With time, the believers began to get back on their feet. The streets felt safe again. The craftsmen returned to making their crafts. The merchants returned to their shops. The farmers returned to their fields. The whole city and the surrounding areas felt safe again. A year later [6 AH], the Prophet decided that he would participate in a pilgrimage to the holy House of God at Makkah. Over 700 believers joined him for the journey. They dressed in the all-white pilgrimage cloths in preparation for recreating the devotional rituals of Abraham and they brought with them animals for

the ritual sacrifice re-enacting God's command for Abraham to sacrifice his son.

Word reached the idol-worshipping Makkans. They were still at war with Muḥammad and Madīnah. They fought three battles already. But they were also the caretakers of the holy sanctuary, where all pilgrims were supposed to be welcome in peace. As Muḥammad and the believers approached the outskirts of Makkah, some Makkan cavalrymen stopped the pilgrims at a place called Ḥudaybīyah. Muḥammad ordered his people to dismount and set camp. Some local tribal people asked the Prophet what he was doing. He said they were coming just for the pilgrimage at the sanctuary of Abraham. They went to Makkah and reported that the Madīnese had not come for war, just for the pilgrimage. The pagans of Makkah refused to believe it. They sent another messenger. He returned to Makkah with the same answer. They sent a third messenger, but he didn't even talk to the Prophet. As soon as he saw the sacrificial animals and everyone dressed in pilgrim cloths, he immediately turned around. He returned to Makkah furious, yelling at Abū Sufyān and the others. How dare they prevent pilgrims from visiting the sacred sanctuary?! The leaders of Makkah were supposed to be the caretakers of the sanctuary! It was their job to protect and provide for all pilgrims! The Makkans found themselves in a dilemma. They sent a fourth messenger. He was rude and insulting. He told the Prophet that the believers would abandon him. Some of the Prophet's companions insulted him back. Then the man grabbed the Prophet's beard. A young man next to them smacked the hand away from the Prophet's beard and threatened to cut the man's hand off with his blade. The man asked who the young man was, and it turned out that the young man was his nephew. The man was shocked. In that society at that time, tribal and family bonds were stronger than anything. He was shocked that his own nephew would attack his own blood relative to defend the Prophet. He returned to the Makkans and told them that Muḥammad's believers were more loyal to him than the subjects of any king in any kingdom.

Then the Prophet sent a messenger to the pagans of Makkah. Abū Sufyān, his wife (the cannibal) Hind, and the other pagans of Makkah so despised Muḥammad and his message of One God that they did not even want to allow him to perform the sacred pilgrimage rites. They ordered their slaves in the army to kill the Prophet's messenger. They shot arrows at him. The shower of arrows killed his camel but he managed to escape and get back to the Prophet. Then the Makkans sent 50 armed sodiers to attack

the Prophet, but they got caught along he way, and they were brought to Muḥammad as prisoners. The Prophet forgave them and released them to go back to Makkah. The Prophet sent another messenger. The second messenger never returned. The Makkans kept him and held him hostage. The believers thought he was killed. They all gathered and pledged allegiance to the Prophet to do whatever was necessary to defend each other, including avenging the death of messenger if the hostage was murdered.

Then a fifth messenger came from Makkah. He said he was sent to negotiate a peace treaty. There was an uproar. The believers were furious at the behavior of the barbaric pagans of Makkah, who claimed to be caretakers of the sacred sanctuary but attacked peaceful, unarmed pilgrims! The Makkan barbarians even took one of the pilgrims hostage! The believers who joined the Prophet for this pilgrimage refused to negotiate with such vile people, especially when many believers were still in Makkah, held hostage by their own families and prevented from going to Madīnah to join the other believers. The Prophet silenced them all and decided to discuss the terms. A scribe began to write the treaty as the Prophet dictated. He said, "In the name of the One God…" but the negotiator interrupted, saying he did not believe in only one god, so he said to write instead "In Your name, O, God…" The Prophet agreed. Then the Prophet continued to dictate, "This is a treaty between Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, and…" but the negotiator interrupted again, saying that he did not believe Muḥammad was the messenger of God, so he should use only his actual name. The Prophet agreed. With every insult, the believers became more and more angry but, each time, the Prophet silenced them and agreed to the terms. The pagan demanded that the Madīnese not continue to Makkah this year, but return next year, and then only for three days. The Prophet agreed. His companions fumed. The pagan demanded a ten year truce, and neither the believers of Madinah nor the pagans of Makkah were to war against each other during that time. The Prophet agreed. The pagan demanded that both sides were free to make any alliances with any other tribes. The Prophet agreed. The pagan demanded that neither side would accept anyone running away to the other side without the permission of the runaway's family. The believers got angry because it was unfair: no one from Madīnah wanted to escape to Makkah, but there were many believers still trapped in Makkah who wanted to escape to be with the believers in Madīnah. Again, the Prophet agreed to the demands.

Just as they were writing the treaty, there was a commotion in the crowd. A believer held prisoner in Makkah heard that Muḥammad and the believers were nearby, just on the outskirts of Makkah. He escaped and ran for his life to join them at Ḥudaybīyah. The crowd parted as he approached the Prophet, bleeding, bruised, panting for breath, with his arms and legs still bound with the fetters he was tied down with in Makkah. He collapsed in front of the Prophet and thanked God for his escape. The pagan negotiator immediately jumped up and grabbed the runaway. The believers gathered, agitated, and perpared to attack the negotiator, but he yelled at the Prophet and pointed to the treaty written by the scribe, saying, "You just agreed not to accept runaways without their family's permission!" It turned out the runaway was the negotiator's son. The bleeding, beaten, and fettered boy begged for help. The infuriated believers, many of whom also only recently escaped from the brutal persecution and torture of the barbaric pagans of Makkah, could not believe what they were seeing. They seethed. They complained to the Prophet and argued and pleaded to save the runaway. But the Prophet repeated that the negotiator was right: an agreement was made. The Prophet made a promise. He had to keep his word. The believers' hearts sank. They watched helplessly as the escaped runaway believer was tied up, whipped, kicked and beaten in front of their eyes. He screamed for help at the top of his lungs, and they listened, painfully, to his cries trailing off in the distance as he was dragged, beaten and bloodied, back to his pagan torturers in Makkah. The believers were heartbroken.

Since they were in the vicinity of the sanctuary area, the Prophet shaved his head and sacrificed an animal according to the Abrahamic rituals. The others did the same. Then the believers returned to Madīnah.

The next year [7 AH], the Prophet made pilgrimage to the sacred shrine of Abraham at Makkah, and many from Madīnah joined him. The idol-worshipping pagans of Makkah grudgingly allowed him, as it was part of their agreement the year before. They avoided Muḥammad as much as possible. On the third of the three days that were agreed upon in the treaty, Muḥammad offered the Makkans to invite them to celebrate a feast on the next day, but Makkans flatly refused and told him to get out of Makkah now that his three days were up. He and the bleievers returned to Madīnah. Now that there was a peace treaty between the believers in the One God of Abraham and the idol-worshiping pagans of Makkah, the believers were safe from the blades, arrows, and torture, and boycotts of the pagans.

Madīnah was able to prosper. Alliances were made with neighboring tribes, some of whom also became believers. The Message spread all over Arabia to more and more tribes. During the peace, prosperity spread. Those Makkan believers who escaped the torture and persecution of the pagans of Makkah by migrating across the sea to Ethiopia returned to Arabia and joined the Prophet in Madīnah.

The next year [8 AH], in retaliation for an old feud from a long time before, one of the allies of the Makkan pagans killed one of the allies of the Prophet. The crime was made even worse because it was done in the sacred sanctuary, where no killing is allowed. Word quickly reached Madīnah. Madīnah's allies came to inform the Prophet that the Makkans broke the peace treaty. Muḥammad predicted that Abū Sufyān, the leader of the pagan Makkans, would come to Madīnah. Soon, he arrived. He tried to see Muḥammad, but the Prophet refused to meet with him. Abū Sufyān tried to talk to some of the closest Companions of the Prophet, but all turned away from him and refused to intercede for him with the Prophet. He went to the house of his daughter, who accepted the Message and became a believer, but she wouldn't even allow him to sit on the Prophet's carpet, saying that he (Abū Sufyān, her father) was a filthy pagan. Abū Sufyān returned to Makkah.

Muḥammad made preparations. He called upon the allies of Madīnah and gathered 10,000 people to march on Makkah. It was the holy month of Ramaḍān, so they were fasting. As they made their way towards Makkah, some people were eager to fight. The Prophet ordered all the troops that they should not attack anyone who does not fight. They should not attack anyone who is hiding in their own homes. They should not attack anyone in the sacred sanctuary. Along the way, some skirmishes broke out. The Prophet himself paid the blood money so that there would be no blood feuds. A few pagans from Makkah traveled to see the Prophet on the way and begged him for forgiveness. He forgave them. They accepted the Message and became believers. There were some idol-worshiping pagans that were so vile, and their crimes against God and the believers were so great, that the Prophet commanded them to be found and killed no matter what, even if they were clinging to the holy shrine in the center of the sacred sanctuary. But even these people, when they came to the Prophet and begged his forgiveness, he forgave them. Even his worst enemies, even those whose crimes were so great that he ordered them to be assassinated, when they admitted their wrongs and asked for forgiveness, Muḥammad forgave

them. Even the assassin who was hired by Abū Sufyān's cannibal wife, to kill the Prophet's beloved uncle Ḥamzah, when he came to the Prophet asking forgiveness, the Prophet forgave him.

The believers and their allies entered Makkah without resistance. Abū Sufyān announced to the people of Makkah that they would be safe in his house, but no one listened to him. They all went into their own houses. The Prophet reminded everyone not to harm anyone who was unarmed and peaceful. He went to the sanctuary, the holy House of God, the first altar built by Abraham, dedicated to the One God, and broke all the statues and idols that the pagans of Makkah had set up there. They were all destroyed so that only the shrine built by Abraham and Ishmael was left. Then he entered the shrine and washed away the drawings that were painted onto it. He circled the shrine seven times, one of the rites established by Abraham. He announced to everyone that the holy House of God was now purified. Idol-worship was now banned in the sanctuary. The people of Makkah came in droves to give their allegiance to the Prophet and accept the Message of the One God. Abū Sufyān was not one of them. He was so belligerent that he even told Muḥammad to his face that he still didn't believe that he was the Messenger of God. One of his friends called him a fool who should be worried about his head. Abū Sufyān eventually reluctantly agreed to give allegiance, without converting. His cannibal wife, Hind, who ate the liver of the Prophet's beloved uncle, Ḥamzah, was also belligerent and complained about the Prophet being the cause of deaths in her family. After her outburst, she also reluctantly gave her allegiance, without converting. The very last of the pagans of Makkah who surrendered came to be known as "The Freed Ones" or "Those Who Were Freed," because the Prophet allowed them all to go free instead of killing them or capturing them as prisoners. These were the very worst enemies of Islam, who starved, tortured and killed the beleivers, who tried to assasinate the Messenger of God, who stole the wealth and property of the believers, who fought wars against the believers, and who held out until the very last moment, when they saw that everyone all around them had already joined Muḥammad and now they had no other choice but to give their allegiance, whether they believed in him as the Messenger of God or not. So they reluctantly gave their allegiance, some, like Abū Sufyān and his cannibal wife, even admitting that they still were not believers. The episode became known as 'The Conquest of Makkah.' The Prophet announced that there will be no more fighting and that blood-feuds are now over. He himself paid

any remaining blood-debts that anyone else had, to ensure that everything was settled. There would be no more revenge. No more retaliation. He announced the beginning of an era of peace, regardless of whether people believed in the One God of Abraham, or were idol-worshiping pagans.

The next year [9 AH], Gabriel brought the words of God that marked a break with all idolatry and paganism. The announcement was made that, from then on, no one was allowed to be an idol-worshipper. Everyone had to believe in the One God. They were free to be Jewsish, or Christian, or any other faith that believed in the One God of Abraham. But, worshiping statues or idols would no longer be allowed. Pagans had to convert to belief in the One God of Abraham. It was not a recommendation or a suggestion. It was not negotiable and it was not optional. It was the command of God. [In fact, it is the very first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other god but *one* God!" (Exodus 20:3).] Worshiping idols was now punishable by death. Of all the chapters that were brought by Gabriel, this is the only chapter of the Qur'ān that does not begin with the words "In the name of God, the Most Kind, the Most Merciful."

Since the wars between the Messenger of God and the wealthy pagans of Makkah who defiled the holy shrine that Abraham built, many of the tribes of Arabia were waiting to see which side would end up winning. After the peaceful conquest of Makkah, the tribes heard the news that Abū Sufyān, his cannibal wife, and the Makkan idol-worshipers decided that it was no use to resist. By this time, [year 10 AH] many tribes that were waiting to see what would happen started to send delegations to Madīnah to pledge their allegiance, to denounce the worship of idols and to publicise their acceptance of the faith. The wave of belief in the One God of Abraham began to spread all over Arabia. With most of the local Arabian tribes now joining the community of believers, the Prophet looked to the empires on the borders of Arabia. He sent armies to protect the borders. From his home in Madīnah, he sent emissaries to the major capitals, inviting them to accept God's Message.

This year was also when the Prophet led the pilgrimage for the last time. It is commonly referred to as 'The Farewell Pilgrimage.' He taught everyone the rites and rituals of Abraham: the circling of the holy shrine seven times, the walking between mount Ṣafā and Mount Marwah seven times, the throwing stones at the places where Satan appeared to Abraham to tempt him away from God, the prayers at Miná and at Mount 'Arafāt, and the animal sacrifice to re-enact Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his

son, by God's command. At the end of the pilgrimage, when everyone was on their way home, a large group of pilgrims was traveling with the Prophet as he left Makkah. He stopped the caravan at a pool of water called Ghadīr Khumm, near Juḥfah, on the way between Makkah and Madīnah. There, before everyone parted ways, the Prophet stopped at the pond of water and gave his famous final sermon, known as the sermon of Ghadīr Khumm. After the sermon, he asked the people gathered,

"O, people, do you not bear witness that God, the Almighty, is your Lord?"

They replied, "Yes."

Then he asked, "Do you not bear witness that God and His messenger have more authority over you than yourselves, and that God, the Almighty, and His messenger are your masters?"

They replied, "Yes."

Then he took ʿAlī's hand in his hand and raised ʿAlī's hand and said: "Whosoever I am his master, ʿAlī is his master."[3]

The next year [11 AH], after returning from the Baqīʿ cemetery and praying for the deceased believers there, the Prophet began to complain of an intense headache. His family nursed him and comforted him as best as they could. He washed and climbed the pulpit to address the people in the mosque. Eventually the pain became too much and he came back down. His family made him take some medicine, but it did not help. He stayed at home, resting, trying to bear the pain as much as he could. Eleven years after the attempted assassination in Makkah and his migration to Madīnah, having cleansed from idol worship the holy House of God that was built by Abraham, and having spread the message of the One God of Abraham throughout Arabia, Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, returned to his Lord. Muḥammad was buried in his own home, next to the private home of

[3] This *ḥadīth* is recorded in many authentic sources, including Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal's *al-Musnad*, al-Nasāʾī's *al-Sunan al-kubrá*, al-Tirmidhī's *al-Sunan*, al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, Ibn Abī Shaybah's *al-Muṣannaf* and many others. Listing all of the citations would require pages of footnotes. The following are just the *ḥadīths* cited by Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in his *al-Musnad* and in his *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*. See: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 38:32 #22945; 2:71 #641, #950, 2:268 #961, 2:434 #1311, 2:584 #989, 5:178 #3061, 30:430 #18479; 32:29 #19279, 32:31 #19280, 32:73 #19325, 32:75 #19328, 38:32 #22945, 38:193 #23107, 38:218 #23143, 38:541 #23563; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:584 #989; 2:643 #1093. For a complete list, see: Muhammed Sādik Hāmidī, *Ahl al-Bayt in Qurʾān and Ḥadīths*, tr. Ali J. Hussain (Chicago: SJL Press, 2025).

his family, where his beloved daughter Fāṭimah lived with his beloved grandchildren, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, all within the Prophet's mosque in Madīnah. Today, a green dome on the roof marks the location of his burial place.

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Among the many authentic *ḥadīth*s that Muḥammad ﷺ narrated about his family are the following:

The Family:

The famous "*ḥadīth* of the cloak" in which Muḥammad ﷺ explains exactly who his family is. One day he was laying down resting under his cloak, using it like a blanket. One by one, his daughter Fāṭimah, her husband ʿAlī, and their sons Ḥasan and Ḥusayn, each came into the house and asked permission to join him. When they were all huddled together under the cloak like a blanket, Muḥammad ﷺ raised his hands to heaven and bade God witness that these five people were his family. Then the angel Gabriel revealed the verse from the Qurʾān, "Indeed, God wants to remove all impurities from you, O, People of the Household [of the Prophet], and to purify you thouroughly" (Q, al-Aḥzāb, 33:33). This famous authentic *ḥadīth* has been transmitted by numerous companions, including the wife of the Prophet, ʿĀ'ishah, another wife of the Prophet, Umm Salamah (Hind bint Abī Umayyah), ʿUmar ibn Abī Salamah, Wāthilah ibn al-Asqāʿ, Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās, Abū Saʿīd al-Khudrī, and others. Numerous versions of it have been transmitted in *Sahīḥ Muslim* and other canonical sources of *ḥadīth* and *tafsīr*.[4]

[4] See, for example: Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Sahīḥ Muslim*, #6414; Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, 5:699 #3871; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:159 #4707; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 6:298-304, # 27085, 26550, 26639; Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-kubrá*, 2:149 #2972; Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd al-Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-sunnah*, 14:116 #3911; Ibn Abī Shaybah ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, *al-Muṣannaf*, 12:72 #3276; Muḥammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmiʿ al-bayān fī taʾwīl al-Qurʾān*, 12:6, among many others. For a complete detailed analysis of all the narrations and all the transmitters, see the work of a contemporary *ḥadīth* scholar,

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "A servant does not truly believe until he loves me more than his own self and my family more than his own family..."[5]

The Messenger God ﷺ also said, "I swear by God, anyone who does not love my family, both for the sake of God and because they are my relatives, has not truly believed."[6]

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: "Love God for the blessings He has nourished you with. Love me for the love of God, and love my family for my love."[7]

The Prophet ﷺ looked at ʿAlī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Fāṭimah and said: "Whoever fights you, I will fight them; whoever is at peace with you, I will be at peace with them." [8]

Love for the Prophet's ﷺ family was also emphasized by the first Caliph, Abū Bakr:

Abū Bakr said: "Because of Muḥammad ﷺ, protect his Ahl al-Bayt (family)."[9]

Abū Bakr said: "I swear by God, who holds my soul in His hand, that doing good to the relatives of the Messenger of God ﷺ is more beloved to me than doing good to my own relatives."[10]

Muhammed Ṣādik Ḥāmidī, *The Ahl al-Bayt in Qur'ān and Ḥadīths,* tr. Ali J. Hussain (Chicago: SJL Press, 2025).

[5] Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 6:183 #6302; *al-Muʃam al-awsaṭ*, 6:59 #5790; Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-īmān*, 3:88 #1420.

[6] Ibn Mājah Muḥammad ibn Yazīd, *al-Sunan*, 1:99 #140; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:932 #1792, 2:935 #1797; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:75 #6960.

[7] Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, 6:134 #3789; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:986 #1952; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 9:149 #10516; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:149 #4716.

[8] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 15:436 #9698; *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:768 #1350; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 3:68 #2555.

[9] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:26 #3713, 5:22 #3751.

Fāṭimah:

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Fāṭimah is a part of me; whoever harms her, harms me." [11]

ʿAlī:

The Prophet ﷺ called ʿAlī "Someone who loves God and His messenger, and someone whom God and His messenger love…"[12]

Salmān said: I heard the Messenger of God ﷺ say: "Whoever loves ʿAlī has loved me; and whoever harbors hatred toward ʿAlī has harbored hatred toward me."[13]

The Messenger of God ﷺ said to ʿAlī: "You are to me as Hārūn [Aaron] was to Mūsá [Moses], except that there is no prophet after me…"[14]

The Messenger of God ﷺ said to ʿAlī: "You are from me, and I am from you."[15]

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Whoever hurts ʿAlī has hurt me."[16]

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Whoever curses ʿAlī has cursed me."[17]

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[10] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:25 #3712, 5:115 #4036.

[11] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:141 #6461.

[12] Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 5:189 #4779. This *ḥadīth* is reported in many other *ḥadīth* collections.

[13] Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:141 #4648. He said this ḥadīth is authentic according to the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim. Al-Dhahabī agreed.

[14] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:24 #3706, 6:3 #4416; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:119-120 #6370, #6371; Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī narrates this ḥadīth in his *Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿAlī* with over 20 *isnād*s; Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī, *Qaṭf al-azhār al-mutanāthirah fī al-akhbār al-mutawātirah*, 281 #103, considers this ḥadīth *mutawātir*.

[15] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 3:241 #2699, 5:179 #4251.

[16] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 3:483 #15960; *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:579 #981; Ibn Abī Shaybah ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, *al-Muṣannaf*, 12:75 #32771; Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:365 #6923; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:122 #4619; Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī, *Dalāʾil al-nubūwah*, 5:394.

The Prophet ﷺ also has other sayings about how only evil people will curse ʿAlī. [18]

Ḥasan:

The Prophet ﷺ used to carry him [Ḥasan] on his shoulders and say "O, God, I love him, so You love him too."[19]

The Prophet ﷺ used to hug Ḥasan in his arms and say, "Whoever loves me, love him [Ḥasan] also."[20]

Husayn:

The Prophet ﷺ hugged and kissed Ḥusayn and would say, "Ḥusayn is from me, and I am from Ḥusayn. God loves whoever loves Ḥusayn."[21]

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[17] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 44:328 #26748; *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:594 #1011; Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī, *al-Sunan al-kubrá*, 7:441 #8422; *Khaṣāʾiṣ ʿAlī*, 111 #91, #92; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:121 #4615.

[18] Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:123 #6382; Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:23 #3703 (summarized); Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:368 #6925; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 5:451 #5746; Abū Dāwūd Sulaymān ibn al-Ashʿath, *al-Sunan*, 4:212 #4650; Ibn Abī ʿĀṣim Aḥmad ibn ʿAmr, *al-Sunnah*, 2:619 #1433.

[19] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:33 #3749, 7:204 #5884; Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:129 #6409, 6410, 7:130 #6411, 6412.

[20] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 38:192 #23106; *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:780 #1387; Ibn Abī Shaybah ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, *al-Muṣannaf*, 12:99 #32852; Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, 21:478 #6588; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:173 #4806.

[21] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 29:102 #17561; *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:772 #1361; Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, 6:123 #3775; Ibn Mājah Muḥammad ibn Yazīd, *al-Sunan*, 1:101 #144; Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:427 #6971; Abū Bakr ibn Abī Shaybah ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, *al-Muṣannaf*, 12:102 #32860; *al-Musnad*, 501 #808; Muḥammad ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrá*, 1:384 #352; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 3:33 #2589; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:194 #4820; Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, 19:314 #6039; Abū Bishr Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Dūlābī, *al-Kuná wa-al-asmāʾ*, 2:315 #386; Muḥibb al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ṭabarī, *Dhakhāʾir al-ʿuqbá*, 133.

Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal narrates that Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī said: "Whoever's eyes water for us, or sheds a single tear for us, God will grant him Paradise."[22]

The Qurʾān:

The holy Qurʾān commands the Prophet ﷺ, "Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it [the religion I have delivered to you] except to love my family" (Q, al-Shūrá, 42:23). It is no coincidence that *all* Muslims, regardless of their group affiliations, when they pray their ritual prayers, they say at least twice in each prayer: "O, God, send blessings upon Muḥammad *and the family of Muḥammad*, and have mercy upon Muḥammad *and the family of Muḥammad*." [23] The command to love the family of Muḥammad is universally accepted in Islam. And the Messenger of God has made it very clear that anyone who makes his family happy, makes *him* happy, and anyone who causes harm to his family, causes *him* harm. So who can call themselves Muslim when they ignore the Prophet's command to love Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥāsan, and Ḥusayn? And who can call themselves Muslim when they do nothing to defend Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥāsan, and Ḥusayn from those who would do them harm? God states in the Holy Qurʾān,

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُؤْذُونَ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَعَنَهُمُ اللَّهُ
فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا مُّهِينًا ﴾

"Indeed, those who wrong God and His Messenger,
God will curse them in this world and in the next and
He has prepared for them a humiliating punishment."
(Q, al-Aḥzāb, 33:57)

[22] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:675 #1154.

[23] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 4:178 #3369, #3370, 8:95 #6357, #6360; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 2:16 #935, #938.

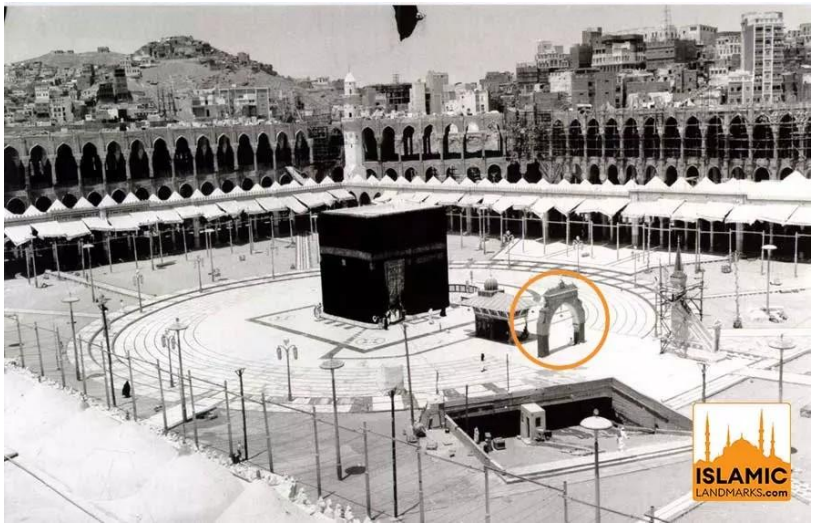
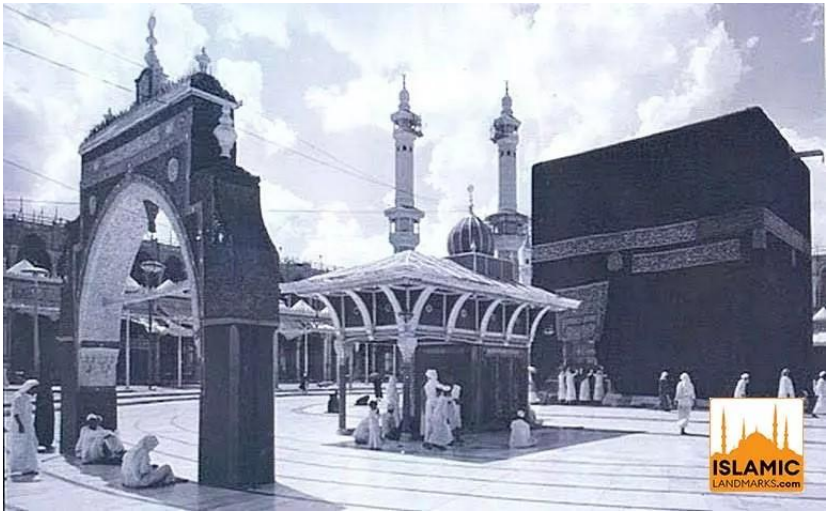


Photo of the Kaʿbah shrine at Makkah (mid-1900s) showing *Bāb Banī Shaybah* (circled). The Gate of Banū Shaybah was one of the entrances to the shrine, and marks the extent of the shrine complex during Muḥammad's lifetime. At the bottom right are stairs leading below ground to the ancient zamzam well.



Another view of *Bāb Banī Shaybah*.

Jabal al-Nūr (the Mountain of Light), outside Makkah at the time of Muḥammad. The Prophet used to climb up this mountain regularly and meditate in a cave at the peak.

The entrance to the cave of al-Ḥirā', at the peak of Mount Nūr.

The tombs of the Prophet's beloved mother, Āminah, and the Prophet's beloved wife, Khadījah, at the Muʿallāh cemetery in Makkah, before its destruction by the modern *Shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah.

Khadījah's grave today.

A modern image of the Prophet's mosque in Madīnah.

The Prophet's tomb, under the famous green dome. The modern *Shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah also attempted to destroy Muḥammad's tomb during their rampage in which they destroyed numerous Islamic historical sites.

2

FĀṬIMAH *AL-ZAHRĀ'*

(THE RADIANT BLOSSOM)

Fāṭimah was the daughter of Muḥammad and Khadījah. She was the youngest of their children and the only one to survive her father. She was the baby of the family. She was very, *very* close with her beloved father. And her father also doted on her. She was 'daddy's little girl.' There are multiple accounts that quote Muḥammad as saying, "Fāṭimah is a part of me. Whoever hurts her hurts *me*, and whoever makes her happy makes *me* happy."[24] She was a growing little girl in Makkah when the idolatrous pagans boycotted her father and anyone who believed in his message, refusing to sell food to any believers. The deprivation and vitamin deficiencies she suffered then affected her health for the rest of her life.

Abū Ṭālib was one of Muḥammad's uncles. He had a son named ʿAlī. Long before Muḥammad received the Message from Gabriel, there was a famine in Makkah. Abū Ṭālib had many children. At that time, Muḥammad suggested to his relatives that they should all help out Abū Ṭālib by volunteering to adopt one of his children and raise them. This would help lighten Abū Ṭālib's heavy load. Since everyone would still be together in the same town anyway, just living in a different household with close relatives, Abū Ṭālib agreed. Muḥammad adopted the young ʿAlī while he was still a child and raised him in the same house with his beloved wife, Khadījah, loving him as his own son. Muḥammad was like a father to ʿAlī. And ʿAlī was like a son to Muḥammad.

When Muḥammad first received God's Message, Khadījah and ʿAlī were the first of his family to become believers. The night that the assassins sent by Abū Sufyān and the other pagans of Makkah came to Muḥammad's house to kill him (he had already escaped, by the grace of God), ʿAlī was wearing Muḥammad's clothes and sleeping in Muḥammad's bed as a decoy. The assassins broke into the house and were ready to kill the

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[24] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 4:323 #18907, 18927; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 14:416 #16459; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:158 #4747.

'Muḥammad' sleeping in Muḥammad's bed, but when they found out that it was ʿAlī, they realized Muḥammad had already escaped. After doing the things that Muḥammad had instructed him to do for him in Makkah in his absence, when it was safe for him to go, ʿAlī also left Makkah to join Muḥammad and the believers in Madīnah.

Many of Muḥammad's Companions asked the Prophet for his beloved daughter's hand in marriage. Muḥammad refused all of them. Then, in the first or second year after the Prophet's migration to Madīnah, he asked Fāṭimah if she wanted to marry ʿAlī, and she agreed. But ʿAlī, like the Prophet, lived so humbly and modestly that he did not even have enough money for a wedding. He wanted to sell his horse, but the Prophet told him that he would need the horse and advised him to sell his shield instead. ʿAlī sold his shield and used the money to buy some food for the guests and some modest gifts for his new bride. The Prophet himself officiated the ceremony.

Thus, two of the earliest believers in the Message, and two of the closest and most beloved people to Muḥammad, and two of the most exemplary believers, were married to each other. The Prophet's household soon grew when Faṭimah gave birth to her first child. In those days, the pagan Arabs liked to give their children tough, warrior names like 'Wolf,' 'Tiger,' and 'War.'[25] Whenever a pagan named 'War' converted and became a believer, Muḥammad would change his name to 'Peace.' The Prophet enouraged believers to give their children good names. When Faṭimah's first child was born, the Prophet named his grandson Ḥasan (good, handsome). Not long after, she gave birth to her second child, and the Prophet named him Ḥusayn ('goodie', 'handsomie').[26] Later, when she was pregant with her third child, the Prophet told her to name the child Muḥsin (Do-gooder, One who does good deeds). Sadly, the Messenger of God breathed his last and returned to his Lord while Fāṭimah was still pregnant with Muḥsin. Not only were they the beloved grandchildren of the Messenger of God, and the children of Muḥammad's beloved Fāṭimah and ʿAlī, but Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were the first children born in Islam.

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[25] The name of Abū Sufyān's father was Ḥarb (War).

[26] In Arabic, the diminutive of Ḥasan is Ḥusayn. In every language, diminutives are ways to make a smaller, cuter version of the original. For example, in English, 'Steven' becomes 'Stevie' and 'Barbara' becomes 'Barbie.' In Spanish, 'Carlos' becomes 'Carlito' and 'Pablo' becomes 'Pablito.'

These five, Muḥammad and his family, were like the 'first family' of Islam: Fāṭimah, Muḥammad's beloved baby daugher from his beloved wife, Khadījah; Fāṭimah's husband and Muḥammad's beloved cousin whom he also raised from childhood; and their two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. They were the only people in the world who were born and/or raised in the Message. While other believers converted and accepted the Prophet as adults, these five were raised in Islam by the Messenger of God himself. They were the living embodiment of the Message. And while the Prophet quickly became the most powerful man in Arabia, he never kept any wealth for himself. He continued to live a simple life, giving instead to the poor. There were times when this most powerful man in Arabia was so poor that he and his family went hungry.

The Qurʾān describes the piety of this first family of Islam when they were fasting during the month of Ramaḍān and only had a little bit of simple food with which to break their fast. Just before it was time to eat, there was a knock at the door. A poor, hungry beggar asked for food. Muḥammad, Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn gave their food to the beggar. They broke their fast with only water for dinner that day. The next day they were fasting and again they had some simple food ready for dinner. Then there was a knock at the door and a poor orphan child was asking for food. They gave their dinner to the orphan and again had only water that night. The next day when they were preparing for dinner, there was a knock at the door and there was a prisoner of war. For the third day in a row, they gave away their food, had only water for themselves, and went to bed hungry. Then Gabriel brought the verse: "And out of their love for God, they feed the poor, the orphan, and the prisoner of war" (Q, al-Insān, 76:8).

This was the simple lifestyle of Muḥammad and his family, who gladly gave away whatever they had to the poor and needy. The family lived together like this, basking in the love of the Prophet, and they also loving him and devoted to him. He showered his little grandchildren with love, even calling them "the two leaders of the youths of Heaven."[27] Sometimes,

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[27] Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, 6:117 #3768, 6:127 #3781; Muḥammad ibn Yazīd Ibn Mājah, *al-Sunan*, 1:85 #118; Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī, *al-Sunan al-kubrá*, 7:318 #8113, 7:368 #8240, #8461, #8472, #8473, #8474, #8475, 10:429 #11949; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 17:31 #10999, #11594, #11618, #11777, #23329, #23330; Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:411 #6959, #6960; Abū Yaʿlá Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī, *al-Musnad*, 2:395 #1169; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam*

when he was leading prayers in the mosque and little Ḥasan and Ḥusayn were playing, when the Prophet bowed and put his forehead to the ground, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn would climb up on his back like they were riding a horse. Instead of coming back up, he would stay in that position, extending his prostration with extra praises of God until the two boys climbed down, then the prophet would continue with the rest of the prayer. After the prayer, when congregants asked him why he took so long in that position (they couldn't see what was going on because everyone's forehead was to the ground), Muḥammad told them that Ḥasan and Ḥusayn had climbed up on his back to play, and he loved them so much he didn't want to disturb their play.

This is how the first family of Islam lived, in the love of the Prophet, and for the love of God, until the final Messenger of God passed away and returned to his Maker. The community of believers was in sorrow. But the first family, Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, were stricken with grief more than anyone. Fāṭimah, in particular, was totally devastated. The loss of her beloved father was an emotional disaster that weighed heavily on her already fragile health. All while she was pregnant with her third child still in her belly. Her sorrow knew no bounds. The loss of her precious father was a calamity. Her husband and little sons were also grieving, but they tried their best to comfort and console her instead. There was only so much they could do. Nothing could describe the depths of her sadness.

ʿAlī and some close family were busy preparing the Prophet's body for burial. The three ritual washes, once with camphor water, once with lotus water, and a final wash with just water, then wrapping in the funeral cloth, and the funeral prayer before the burial. While ʿAlī and the family were doing this, and while Fāṭimah was grieving, others were arguing and fighting over who should be next leader of the community. Conversation became yelling, and yelling became physical confrontations. People came to blows. ʿAlī was in the house with Fāṭimah and refused to participate in the confrontations. The violence spilled onto the streets and a near riot formed in front of the house. They banged on the door and demanded that ʿAlī come out. Fātimah, heavily pregnant, stood behind the door and refused to unlock the door. The people outside became angrier and more violent.

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al-kabīr, 3:61 #2534–2552; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:166 #4778, #4779, #4780, 3:381 #5630. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:775 #1372; Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:421 #6966; Abū Yaʿlá Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī, *al-Musnad*, 3:397 #1874; Muḥammad ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrá*, 1:377 #343.

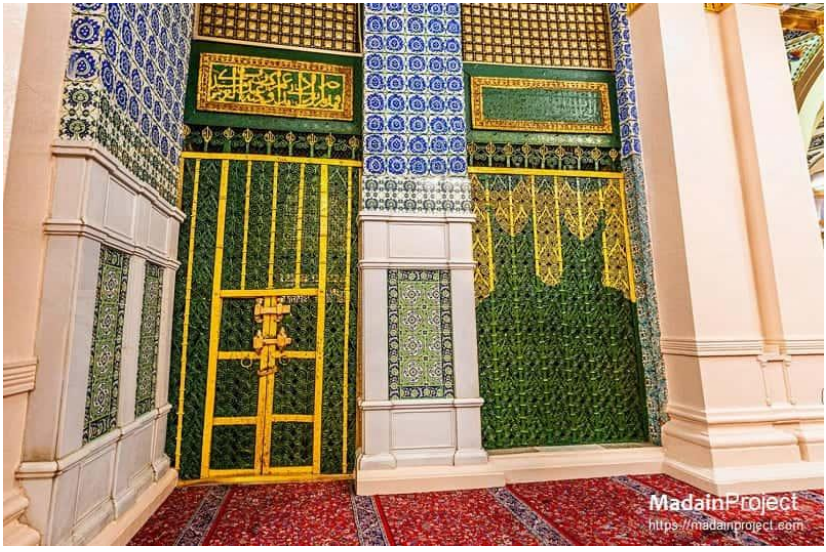
Someone kicked open the door to force their way in. The lock broke, the door swung on its hinges, and the Prophet's beloved daughter was smashed between the heavy door and the wall. She screamed in pain. Her baby miscarried and dropped to the floor. Her bloody insides spilled out and she fell to the ground in a heap on top of her dead baby and her bloody insides. The Prophet's beloved daughter, about whom he said, "Fāṭimah is a part of me. Whoever hurts her hurts *me*…" was slumped on the ground in a bloody heap, sceaming in pain and crying.

Her bleeding eventually stopped. Fāṭimah survived the night. But the damage to her already frail body never healed. The loss of her father, the loss of her baby, the loss of her already ailing health, was too much to bear. She fell into despondency. The catastrophe was more than most people could suffer. She spent most of her time weeping at her beloved father's grave. The despair was too difficult to endure. Her health continued to deteriorate. She withered away. She made her husband swear never to allow those who did that to her to attend her funeral. Within only months after her father's passing, the beloved daughter of the Messenger of God, whom he caressed and hugged and kissed and showered with love and tenderness, returned to her Maker. ʿAlī buried her privately in secret, just as she requested.

Fāṭimah was the only one of Muḥammad's children to reach adulthood and survive him. All of the descendants of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God, are the progeny of Fāṭimah. To this day, Muslims call Muḥammad's descendants *Sayyid* (Leader) or *Sharīf* (Noble), out of respect for their lineage to the Messenger of God.

The *Baqīʿ al-gharqad* cemetery in Madīnah prior to its destruction during the rampages of the modern *Shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah the early 1800s. The graves of the beloved family of the Prophet were desecrated and destroyed, along with the graves of many of the Prophet's Companions buried there.

The destroyed *Baqīʿ al-gharqad* cemetery in Madīnah today, with the Prophet's mosque in the background. Per her wishes, Fāṭimah was buried in privately and in secret. She may have been buried in her house (next to the Prophet's house, under the green dome, see below), or she may have been buried in the Baqīʿ cemetery in an unmarked grave. These are the two most likely possibilities. It is also possible that she may have been buried elsewhere. God knows best. Below is an image of Bāb Fāṭimah (the door to Fātīmah's house, next to the Prophet's.



II

THE RIGHTLY GUIDED

3

ʿALĪ IBN ABĪ ṬĀLIB
THE COMMANDER OF THE FAITHFUL

After the death of the Prophet, the first caliph was Abū Bakr. During the Prophet's lifetime, tribes in Arabia who gave their allegiance to the Prophet and became believers paid their tithes to him at Madīnah. After the Prophet's death, some of these tribes, far from Madīnah and not part of the decision-making process that led to the choice of the new caliph, refused to pay tithes to Abū Bakr. At the beginning of the Prophet's Message, when the believers were just a small community, the tithes did not amount to much, but by the time all of Arabia paid allegiance to the Prophet, the tithes added up to millions and millions of gold and silver coins. Abū Bakr gathered armies and attacked the tribes refusing to pay, forcing them to submit to the authority of Madīnah. These battles were called the *Riddah* (Apostasy) Wars. Abū Bakr assigned as leaders of these armies members of Abū Sufyān's family and relatives. One by one, the armies of the caliph won each of the battles. Eventually, all of Arabia came under caliphal control. One day, Abū Bakr developed a fever. The fever never broke. Day after day, he remained bedridden and did not improve. Sensing that his end was near, Abū Bakr appointed ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb as the second caliph. Abū Bakr's caliphate lasted only two years and ended when he died in 13 AH.

While Abū Bakr sent a few small expeditions outside of Arabia, they were no more than minor battles. Abū Bakr focused his main efforts on the *Riddah* Wars within Arabia. The wars were successful and the ʿUmar, new caliph at Madīnah, now had at his command armies of hundreds of thousands at the borders of Arabia with nothing to do. ʿUmar decided to send full scale armies beyond Arabia. During ʿUmar's caliphate, Madīnah's armies went westward and conquered Egypt. ʿUmar sent armies Northwest and conquered Syria, where Abū Sufyān had a vacation home, and he allowed Abū Sufyān's relatives to lead these armies and rule those areas.

ʿUmar also sent armies Northeast and conquered Iraq, and even further eastward into Central Asia. Everywhere they conquered, the Muslim armies built garrison towns where they lived, apart from the locals. The Muslims did not want to blend in with the local populations because they did not want to be influneced by the non-Muslim ways. Also the Muslim armies did not want to convert the locals. Just as today we pay tax to the government for the military to defend the country, non-Muslims had to pay a tax called *jizyah* for the security provided by the Muslim army. Muslims do not have to pay the *jizyah* tax. Muslims only had to pay their religious tithes. The early Muslim conquerors were not interested in converting the locals because ruling over non-Muslims was much more profitable than ruling over converts to Islam.

The taxes from all these rich lands brought a tremendous amount of wealth to the capital at Madīnah. But Madīnah was still just a small town in Arabia, and the caliph was still just a normal man who walked the streets like anyone else. One day, as ʿUmar was walking in the market, someone complained that his tax is too high and asked ʿUmar to do something about it. ʿUmar asked how much tax he paid. The man answered two silver coins per day. ʿUmar then asked what kind of work he did. The man answered that he was a carpenter, stonemason, and a smith. ʿUmar then said that he didn't think the tax was that high. A few days later, as ʿUmar was leading the prayers, the man slipped in with the congregation, got closer to ʿUmar, and stabbed him six times. On his deathbead, ʿUmar appointed six Companions of the Prophet to choose one among themselves as the next caliph. ʿUmar's caliphate lasted for ten years, until his death in the year 23 AH.

ʿUthmān ibn ʿAffān became the third caliph. He was of the clan of Umayyah, the family whose members included Abū Sufyān and others among the worst enemies of Muḥammad and the believers. These were the most staunch idol-worshipping pagans of Makkah, the ones who attacked, tortured, starved, and killed the believers. They were the ones who warred against Muḥammad and the believers. They were the biggest enemies of Muḥammad. Members of this family were among the people who vexed the Prophet the most.[28] Unlike the rest of his family, ʿUthmān was one of the earliest believers to join Muḥammad. At the time, while this family was

[28] For a *ḥadīth* to this effect, see: Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 4:480 #8482. The great scholar of ḥadīths, Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn al-Dhahabī, stated: "This *ḥadīth* conforms to the conditions of al-Bukhārī and Muslim."

torturing, fighting, and killing the believers, ʿUthmān's decision to join Muḥammad and the believers made ʿUthmān's family very angry. ʿUthmān was the hostage that was held captive by the Makkan pagans just before the Treaty of Ḥudaybīyah. (Yes, his own family held him hostage!) If Muḥammad, his daughter Fāṭimah, and his grandchildren were the first family of Islam, then Abū Sufyān, his cannibal wife and their family were the *last* family of Islam. In fact, they were literally the very last, giving up only reluctantly after the conquest of Makkah, and even then, Abū Sufyān openly admitted that he still didn't believe Muḥammad was the Messenger of God.

When Muḥammad first preached the message of the One God of Abraham, Abū Sufyān and the Umayyad clan saw the Message of returning to the faith of Abraham as a threat. They profited from the worship of the idols in the holy sanctuary of the holy House of God built by Abraham. They monopolized the pilgrimage to the sanctuary and the trade that passed through the safety of the sacred area. Their wealth and power made them the ruling elite of Makkah. Their power was based on their domination of the poor, the slaves, the orphans, and the needy, all of whom were attracted to Muḥammad's message of justice and One God. But now Abū Sufyān and his greedy family saw that what Muḥammad established could bring them even more wealth and power than they could ever imagine. First, during the caliphate of Abū Bakr, tithes from all of Arabia came to the caliphal capital at Madīnah. Then, during the caliphate of ʿUmar, taxes paid from Egypt and North Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean, Iraq, and Central Asia were being sent to Madīnah. The wealth of Abū Sufyān and his idol-worshiping pagan family in Makkah at the dawn of Islam was nothing compared to the millions and millions of gold and silver coins coming to the treasury of the caliphate now! The power they had from the wealth in just one small town named Makkah was nothing compared to the power over all of Arabia, all of Egypt, all of Syria, and all of Persia! And the armies continued to expand into more and more lands.

Abū Sufyān and the rest of ʿUthmān's idol-worshiping pagan relatives, the same people who were angry with him when he was one of the earliest people to join Muḥammad and the believers, now were thrilled that he was the new caliph! They took advantage of him to obtain high positions in his government. They became administrators, treasurers, tax collectors, chiefs of police, generals in the army, mayors and governors. Abū Sufyān and his

cannibal wife, Hind, had a son named Muʿāwiyah (little barking dog).[29] He worked his way up the ranks and, by the caliphate of ʿUthmān, became governor of the rich lands of Syria. There he had more and more nearby territories added to his control and he amassed a considerable army. Muʿāwiyah learned from, and imitated, many of the practices of the Christian Byzantine empire (the Holy Roman Empire) in his administration, financial management, and military affairs. Muʿāwiyah married a woman from a Christian tribe. They had a son named Yazīd, who was raised by her tribe. ʿUthmān's relatives were also placed in leadership positions in Egypt, Iraq, Persia, and throughout the caliphate.

In Madīnah, ʿUthmān was surrounded by his relatives as close advisers and managers of his affairs. His cousin, Marwān, served as his right-hand man in Madīnah. Marwān's father, al-Ḥakam, was the brother of ʿUthmān's father, and, like Abū Sufyan, was among the last people to give allegiance to the Prophet. Like Abū Sufyān, even after giving his allegiance, he continued to vex the Prophet. He would ridicule and mock the Prophet. Sometimes he mocked the way the Prophet talked, sometimes he mocked the way the Prophet walked. One time, the Prophet turned around and caught him in the act. The Prophet cursed him and cursed those who would come from his loins.[30] He pretended to be a believer but was secretly an informant. He used to eavesdrop and spy on the Prophet, then report secrets to the enemies of Islam.[31] When he was caught, the Prophet exiled him from Madīnah, never allowing him to return.[32] This family, the worst

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[29] In the English, the word representing the sound that a dog makes (anomatopoeia) is "Woof! Woof!" The equivalent word in the Arabic language is " ʿĀw! ʿĀw!" The active participle, the noun for the person who makes that sound, is "Muʿāwī." Adding a *tā' marbūṭah* at the end makes it diminutive, "Muʿāwīyah," meaning, 'the little one who is always barking.' One can only imagine why his mother and father may have named him that.

[30] For the original *ḥadīth*, see: Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 26:51 #16128; Abū Bakr Aḥmad ibn ʿUmar al-Bazzār, *al-Baḥr al-zakhkhār (Musnad al-Bazzār)*, 6:159 #2197.

[31] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 8:66 #6241, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, 368 #1072; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 6:180 #5764, 5765; Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, 4:361 #2709; Aḥmad ibn Shuʿayb al-Nasāʾī, *al-Sunan al-kubrá*, 6:376 #7035, *al-Mujtabá*, 8:60 #4859; Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 37:461 #22802. The narration of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAbbās in al-Tabarānī's *al-Muʃam al-kabīr* shows that this person was Ḥakam.

[32] Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 3:351 #3097, 12:148 #12724; Ibn al-Athīr ʿAlī ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad, *Usd al-ghābah*, 1:274; Aḥmad ibn ʿAlī ibn Ḥajar, *al-Iṣābah,* 2:104 #1783.

enemies of the Prophet, who continued their vile behavior even after claiming to give allegiance to the Prophet, and who were cursed by the Prophet during his lifetime, now served as ʿUthmān's inner circle of advisors in Madīnah and held the most important government positions throughout the caliphate.

Before long, these same wicked people who had made so much trouble for the Prophet and were cursed by him, now also began to make trouble for ʿUthmān. Governors treated their people violently, levied unnecessarily heavy taxes, took public lands for themselves, and lined their own pockets with public funds. In Madīnah, ʿUthmān's advisers encircled him and either prevented him from knowing about the corruption throughout the caliphate, or covered it up and told him everything was fine. Things got worse and worse. People throughout the caliphate became more and more upset. Communications went unanswered. Complaints were dismissed. Eventually, delegations of elders traveled to Madīnah to discuss their grievances with the caliph directly. He promised them to take care of things. But the corruption had gone on for so long and their complaints went unanswered for so long, it was difficult for them to believe ʿUthmān. He asked ʿAlī to intervene. ʿAlī met with ʿUthmān and the delegations, heard everyone out, and when ʿUthmān promised to take care of everything, ʿAlī vouched for ʿUthmān's promises. The delegations were satisfied, and went back to their home lands.

But, as time passed, ʿUthmān's advisers in Madīnah and his governors throughout the caliphate made him go back on his promises. Things got even worse. The governors became even more harsh with their people. Corruption increased. Some governors were alcoholics. Others claimed that the conquered lands were their private playground. They claimed that they were better than the people they governed because they were from Makkah, just like the Prophet was (even though the were the enemies of the Muḥammad in Makkah!). The people became more and more upset. The worst enemies of Islam, cursed by the Prophet, were now governing over the Muslims, and the caliph kept defending them and making excuses for them because they were his relatives. Now more angry people came to Madīnah to complain directly to ʿUthmān. Some of the same people as before came to remind him that he broke his promises from their last visit. A group came from Egypt. Another group came from Kūfah (in Iraq). Another group came from Baṣrah (in Iraq). They confronted ʿUthmān publicly with the issues. ʿUthmān admitted there was some financial mismanagement, but

said that he would take care of things. His inner circle of advisers told ʿUthmān that he should crack down on the people who were complaining and kill them. ʿUthmān again asked ʿAlī to intervene. ʿAlī tried to make peace between the parties. ʿUthmān again asked ʿAlī to vouch for his promises. ʿAlī told him that he should address the concerns right away. ʿUthmān promised to the people that he would take care of everything and there was nothing to worry about. The people disbanded and started on their way home.

The group going back home to Egypt was going happily along their way. On the outskirts of Madīnah they saw someone on a camel going by them at top speed. In those days, and even today, people put colorful decorations and markings on their horses and camels or their saddles or stirrups. Someone recognized that it was one of ʿUthmān's camels. The Egyptians became suspicious and raced to catch up to the camel and its rider. They noticed it was ʿUthmān's servant. They asked what was his hurry and what was going on? They were not satisfied with his answers. They searched him and found a message from ʿUthmān to the governor of Egypt. It had ʿUthmān's seal on it. It listed the names of people in the group and said they were on their way back to Egypt from Madīnah and that, when they arrived back home in Egypt, the governor was ordered to kill them. They were angry before, but now, they were *furious*! They tied up the messenger and headed back to Madīnah with the evidence.

They confonted ʿUthmān. He denied everything. They said it was his camel. He said it was taken without his permission. They said the messenger was his own servant. He said the servant did it without his knowledge. They said the letter has his own official seal. He said he had no idea who used his caliphal seal. The people were now on edge. This was now the last straw. They said to ʿUthmān that one of two possibilities was true. Either he was lying, in which case he did not deserve to be leader of the Muslims and he should step down as caliph. Or, he was telling the truth, in which case he was so incompetent that evil people around him were manipulating him and making caliphal decisions, issuing caliphal decrees, and sending caliphal messages with his official seal, all without his knowledge, and he should step down. Either way, he was not fit to be leader and he should step down.

The people were becoming more and more agitated. ʿUthmān went to lead the Friday prayers and when he climbed the pulpit and gave the sermon, people pelted him with stones and he passed out unconscious. His family dragged him back to his house. ʿAlī sent his sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn,

to protect ʿUthmān from the mob. For a few weeks, ʿUthmān still led the prayers at the mosque, but then the mob wouldn't let him anymore. For a few more weeks after that, they surrounded his house and refused to leave until he addressed their demands. ʿAlī continued to try to resolve the issues peacefully. ʿUthmān sent a letter to Muʿāwiyah in Syria, asking for troops to save him from the mob. Muʿāwiyah, the son of Abū Sufyān and the cannibal, Hind, dragged his feet and delayed. Things in Madīnah escalated and eventually, the mob wouldn't allow anyone in or out of ʿUthmān's house. ʿAlī sent Ḥasan and Ḥusayn to bring ʿUthmān food and water. Out of respect for the Prophet's family, the mob let them through. ʿAlī even warned ʿUthmān directly that his advisers and family were not to be trusted; that the whole mess was because ʿUthmān kept listening to their advice. He said to ʿUthmān that the people want justice. All he had to do was give it to them. ʿUthmān continued to insist that he had done nothing wrong.

The people of Madīnah shut themselves in their homes. They did not want to get involved. ʿĀ'ishah, the youngest wife of the Prophet,[33] left Madīnah. Some other Companions of the Prophet also left the city. The situation became more and more tense. The mob became more and more on edge. The stalemate was dragging on and on. Some among the mob were cool-headed and just waited for ʿUthmān to abdicate his leadership position. Others became increasingly agitated. Eventually, one of the hot-headed people got tired of the standoff and, realizing that ʿUthmān was never going to step down, broke into his house and killed him.

The seige was over. But the problems for the community of believers had just begun. In the chaos of this horrible situation, people looked to the most qualified person to lead the community. ʿAlī was chosen as the next caliph. In Syria, Muʿāwiyah, who deliberately delayed sending troops for ʿUthmān's defense, refused to accept ʿAlī as the caliph. He knew that ʿAlī would rule justly and in the interest of the Muslims. Muʿāwiyah knew that he would not be able to manipulate ʿAlī the way he did ʿUthmān. Muʿāwiyah knew that he would lose his governorship and his position as ruler in Syria. He decided to use the situation to his political advantage and

[33] Muḥammad truly loved Khadījah as his soul-mate. The proof of this is that he never married any other woman while Khadījah was alive. After her death, and after he became leader of the community of believers at Madīnah, he accepted several political marriages to make alliances with various people and tribes. Many of these wives were elderly widows. ʿĀ'ishah was a young girl. Muḥammad did not have any children from any of these political marriages except for a boy with his wife Māriyah, who was named Ibrāhīm and who died in infancy.

blame ʿAlī for the murder of ʿUthmān. The relatives of ʿUthmān who used ʿUthmān until he was killed also knew they would not be able to manipulate ʿAlī they way they did ʿUthmān. Like Muʿāwiyah, they knew that ʿAlī would rule by the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet, that was the exact opposite of what they wanted. They ran away from Madīnah back to Makkah, where they were Muḥammad's worst enemies during his lifetime. There, they convinced ʿĀ'ishah to rally people against ʿAlī. One of them even used the wealth he pocketed from the treasury at Madīnah to pay people to fight ʿAlī. Not only did they refuse to give ʿAlī allegiance and recognize him as the new caliph, but they also stirred up the people into taking up arms to war against ʿAlī. They, the very people who got ʿUthmān into trouble in the first place, now acted like ʿUthmān's loyal companions and demanded revenge for the blood of ʿUthmān. They blamed ʿAlī, even though ʿAlī and his children were the ones who defended and protected ʿUthmān.

In Iraq, the people overthrew the governors there and pledged allegiance to ʿAlī. The troublemakers in Makkah wrote letters to the people in Iraq trying to convince them not to accept ʿAlī as caliph. Word reached Iraq that troops were gathering. ʿAlī insisted that he would not attack anyone, but he would defend the people and the caliphate if anyone attacked. He insisted that he only wished to bring peace to the community. Those who already pledged allegiance to him knew they made the right choice, and those who were undecided realized that ʿAlī was in the right, so they joined him.

ʿĀ'ishah joined two others in Makkah, Ṭalḥah and Zubayr,[34] and rallied troops to oppose ʿAlī. They marched towards Iraq. ʿAlī gave a final sermon before going out to meet the attacking army. He announced that he would not allow any of those who participated in attacking ʿUthmān to join him. When the two armies met [in 36 AH], ʿAlī spoke to the attackers. He reminded them that he was the family of the Prophet and that he was defending the way of the Messenger of God. He tried to convince them and that what they were doing was wrong. The attackers exclaimed that they would never abandon the family of the Messenger of God! Both sides became more at ease. Both sides separated and went back to their camps for the night. Peace was in the air. The people who beseiged ʿUthmān realized

[34] Both Ṭalḥah and Zubayr were among the six people appointed by ʿUmar as he was dying, to choose from among themselves within three days who would be the next leader, or have their heads lopped off.

that if there was peace, ʿAlī would not let them get away. The best thing for them was to have both sides fighting each other. They secretly ambushed their own tribes in the attacking army and said it was ʿAlī's army who did it. At the same time, they ambushed ʿAlī's army and said it was the attackers who did it. By morning, both sides were furious and the armies got ready to fight, each one thinking that the other had broken the peace.

ʿĀ'ishah was placed on a camel and acted as a sort of cheerleader to rally the troops and raise morale. ʿAlī and his troops gathered to defend the caliphate. The two armies met. The attacking army all rallied around ʿĀ'ishah's camel, so the war later came to be known as the Battle of the Camel. ʿAlī talked with Zubayr, who was a Companion of the Prophet and witnessed when the Prophet said well-known ḥadīths about ʿAlī. For example, when the Prophet said, "Whoever loves ʿAlī has loved me; and whoever harbors hatred toward ʿAlī has harbored hatred toward me," and "Whoever hurts ʿAlī has hurt me." ʿAlī reminded Zubayr of the Prophet's words and Zubayr became ashamed of himself. He decided to withdraw from the fighting. As he was going away, Marwān (the same Marwān who was ʿUthmān's right hand man and who was cursed by the Messenger of God) shot an arrow at Zubayr, who eventually died. Ṭalḥah was also wounded. ʿAlī's troops gained the upper hand and surrounded ʿĀ'ishah's camel. He ordered that none of the women should be harmed, and none of the fighters who gave up should be harmed. ʿĀ'ishah's brother, Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, was fighting alongside ʿAlī in ʿAlī's army. ʿAlī assigned him to check on his sister. ʿĀ'ishah, and make sure that she was unharmed. He commanded him to protect his sister, and commanded everyone to preserve her dignity. At this point, ʿĀ'ishah realized that vile people with bad intentions had manipulated her into fighting against ʿAlī. After the Battle of the Camel, ʿĀ'ishah avoided getting involved in political confrontations ever again. After the battle, the army returned back to town. ʿAlī gave a sermon and praised the righteous companions of the Messenger of God, even those who fought in the enemy army that had just attacked him. Then ʿAlī performed the funeral prayer for all the dead, even those in the enemy army.

The wicked troublemakers of Abū Sufyān's family, who deceived ʿUthmān and ʿĀ'ishah, manipulating them both and willing to sacrifice them both, just to maintain their own selfish interests, once they saw the tide of the battle shift in favor of ʿAlī, they turned around and ran away to Syria. On his throne in the palace there, Muʿāwiyah, the son of Abū Sufyān and

his cannibal wife, welcomed them. They were all enemies of Muḥammad along with Abū Sufyān and his wife, when they were all still in Makkah. Now they were all enemies of ʿAlī. Just as they banded together to oppose the message of Islam preached by Muḥammad, they now banded together to oppose the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet as practiced by ʿAlī. Before the battle, the governor of Egypt had already run away to Syria to join Muʿāwiyah. During the conquest of Makkah, when the Prophet took control of the city peacefully and ordered that the residents not be harmed, there were only a handful of people who were such enemies of Islam and who did things so inexcusable that Muḥammad ordered them to be hunted down and killed, even if they were in the holy sanctuary. This corrupt governor of Egypt was one of them. Marwān, whose family was cursed by the Prophet, and whose father spied on the Prophet in Madīnah and who was cursed by the Prophet and exhiled from the city forever, after shooting Zubayr at the Battle of the Camel, also ran off to Syria to join Muʿāwiyah. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who publicly argued with ʿUthmān and insulted him, then instigated the group that surrounded ʿUthmān's house and killed him, and who actually proudly took credit for ʿUthmān's death, also went to Syria and joined Muʿāwiyah. All of these people went to join Muʿāwiyah, the son of Abū Sufyān and his cannibal wife. Muʿāwiyah accepted them with open arms. This son of the worst enemies of Muḥammad during his lifetime, welcomed his relatives and others among the enemies of Muḥammad, gathering them together on one team to fight against the new caliph, ʿAlī, just as they and their parents fought against Muḥammad.

When Muḥammad preached justice and equality in Makkah, and defended the poor from the abuses of the rich, Abū Sufyān and his pagan family opposed the Message that they knew would threaten their wealth and power. Now, the son of Abū Sufyān and his wife, the cannibal, opposed the boy who was raised by Muḥammad and now continued to uphold the same message as the Messenger of God. The corrupt governors and other government officials from Abū Sufyān's family who used ʿUthmān to secure positions and wealth for themselves, now saw their governorships, power, and wealth threatened by the new caliph from Muḥammad's family. They knew very well that ʿAlī stood for the same principles as Muḥammad, who raised him since childhood. They knew that ʿAlī would never be bribed, or bought, or convinced to go against the Qur'ān. They knew that they could not deceive ʿAlī the way they could trick ʿUthmān and ʿĀ'ishah. They knew that ʿAlī tried to protect both ʿUthmān and ʿĀ'ishah during the crises that

they instigated. They knew that ʿAlī being caliph meant that their domination and corruption of the caliphate would be over. They had to come up with a way to fool people into fighting against ʿAlī.

The same vile ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who insulted ʿUthmān during his life, and who admitted to instigating the murder of ʿUthmān after his death, now suggested to Muʿāwiyah that they use "revenge for the blood of ʿUthmān" as an excuse to rile people up against ʿAlī. Muʿāwiyah immediately took to the idea. In the mosque, he produced a bloody shirt and told the crowd that it was ʿUthmān's. He went against the consensus (*jamāʿah*) of the community and refused to give his allegiance to the legitimate caliph, ʿAlī. Muʿāwiyah demanded revenge for the murder of ʿUthmān, even though the one who admitted to planning ʿUthmān's murder was right there by Muʿāwiyah's side, and even though ʿAlī was the one who tried to defend and protect ʿUthmān. The people fell for the trick and all screamed for revenge! Since Muʿāwiyah refused to recognize ʿAlī as the new caliph, he refused to step down from his post as governor of Syria and refused to allow ʿAlī's appointed governor to take over. In all the mosques in all the territories that he governed, Muʿāwiyah and his *shīʿah* (followers) repeated the same trick and people all over Syria began to fall for it. Muʿāwiyah conscripted an army of paid soldiers to fight ʿAlī and his supporters. The people of Syria were fooled by all these tricks and supported the war against ʿAlī. The ones who weren't fooled were bought and paid to support the war against ʿAlī.

ʿAlī gathered his army of believers who volunteered because it was their duty to follow the rightly-guided caliph, and to support the family of the Messenger of God, as the Prophet commanded. It was the duty of every believer to uphold the Qurʾān, the principles of Islam, and the traditions of the Prophet. It was the duty of every believer to follow the consensus (*jamāʿah*) of the community. There was no question that the community had already chosen ʿAlī as the next caliph after ʿUthmān. It was clear who was in the right and who was in the wrong. On one side were all the people who fought against Muḥammad, the people who tortured and killed the believers, the people who tried multiple times to assassinate Muḥammad, among them the son of the woman who ate the liver of Muḥammad's beloved uncle, the son of Abū Sufyān, among them people who were cursed by and whose parents were cursed by the Messenger of God, and people who were so evil and wicked that Muḥammad ordered for them to be hunted down and killed even if they were in the holy sanctuary at Makkah. On the other side were the earliest believers, those who who were tortured

by the first group, those whose friends and relatives were killed by the first group, those who defended the Messenger of God when he was attacked by the first group, the very first believer who was raised by Muḥammad from a child as his own son, the only person Muḥammad allowed to marry his beloved daughter, and Muḥammad's two beloved grandchildren. The family of the worst enemies of Muḥammad who reluctantly joined the Prophet at the very last moment when they saw they had no other choice, hired an army to fight a war against Muammad's family and the earliest companions of the Messenger of God.

The two armies met [in the year 37 AH] on the shores of the Euphrates river at a place called Ṣiffīn (near the modern city of Raqqah) and the ensuing war was called the Battle of Ṣiffīn. The two sides immediately fought fiercely for control of access to the river. The fighting was intense. Eventually ʿAlī's troops took control of the river. They tried to prevent Muʿāwiyah's troops and their horses from drinking. ʿAlī commanded them to share the water. The caliph forbade using thirst as a weapon. Everyone has a right to drink, even the enemy army. ʿAlī kept preaching to the attacking troops, inviting them towards unity. He kept trying to explain the lies and tricks of Muʿāwiyah and his associates. But Muʿāwiyah and his people were very clever at deception and manipulation. They knew how to rile people up emotionally. Also, many in the army were hired mercenaries, so they were fighting just for pay, not for any beliefs or principles. The two armies fought back and forth for about a month. Then the new moon marked the holy month of Muḥarram, in which fighting was not allowed. ʿAlī called for a truce during the holy month. During this time, ʿAlī continued to send messengers to Muʿāwiyah, inviting him towards peace and unity (*jamāʿah*). Muʿāwiyah refused every time. He tried to bribe ʿAlī's closest companions by offering to make them governors if they left ʿAlī's army and chose Muʿāwiyah as caliph instead. Muʿāwiyah even accused ʿAlī of killing ʿUthmān himself. He demanded that ʿAlī relinquish the caliphate.

At the end of the one month truce, ʿAlī again preached to the attacking army, saying that he gave them a whole month to try to resolve things peacefully. ʿAlī then challenged Muʿāwiyah: Do not involve thousands of innocents in bloodshed… since you want to be caliph, let us duel, man-to-man, and see who wins. Muʿāwiyah flatly refused. ʿAlī was a great warrior. He never lost a fight. Muʿāwiyah knew that he didn't stand a chance. No one could go toe-to-toe with ʿAlī and win. Before the fighting restarted, ʿAlī

gave the same instructions he gave at all his battles: No blocking access to water. No killing women. No killing the wounded. No killing prisoners. No killing anyone who surrenders. We are only defending against those who are attacking us.

The fighting started back up again. Now it was even more intense than the month before the truce. Swords and spears and shields clashed. Arrows rained down. Men and horses all crashed into each other. Thousands were killed. ʿAlī fought on the front lines along with his army. Muʿāwiyah stayed comfortably in the shade of a luxurious tent giving commands for messengers to take to the battlefield. The fighting was intense. The armies fought through the night, even in the dark, all the way to the break of dawn. ʿAlī and the believers defending the caliphate broke through the ranks of the attacking army of hired soldiers and enemies of Muḥammad. The believers were winning. The attackers were being mowed down. The attackers got pushed back all the way to Muʿāwiyah's tent. Muʿāwiyah got on his horse and prepared to escape for his life. ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, who boasted of planning the killing of ʿUthmān, told Muʿāwiyah to have his troops raise pages of the Qurʾān on their spears as a tactic to divide the army of believers. Muʿāwiyah gave the order. When they saw pages of the Qurʾān raised on spears, some in ʿAlī's army stopped fighting. ʿAlī told them not to stop, it was just a nother trick the enemy cooked up because the believers are about to win. The believers loyal to the caliph and the family of Muḥammad continued to follow ʿAlī's instructions, but the others stopped. They even threatened to kill ʿAlī just as ʿUthmān was killed, if he didn't stop the fighting. ʿAlī's own army was threatening him. He had no choice.

A messeneger was sent to the attackers to see what they wanted. They came up with a new scheme and said: Let each side choose representatives to meet and negotiate a solution. Muʿāwiyah chose ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ, the devious trickster who privately boasted of getting ʿUthmān killed and at the same time publicly accused ʿAlī of killing ʿUthmān. ʿAlī chose a loyal and true companion to represent him. But the same fools who fell for ʿAmr and Muʿāwiyah's trick of raising pages of the Qurʾān now complained to ʿAlī that his choice was not neutral… they wanted someone else. ʿAlī warned them that ʿAmr was not neutral either, and that they were falling for yet another trick by Muʿāwiyah. They again refused to listen to him and threatened him. The person they chose was an older fellow named Abū Mūsá. He went to meet with ʿAmr and was easily fooled. ʿAmr suggested that they would meet at some point in the future, on neutral territory, and

decide who should be caliph. Abū Mūsá agreed. They wrote down the agreement. The scribe was writing "This is a treaty between Muʿāwiyah, son of Abū Sufyān, and the Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī…" ʿAmr said not to write 'Commander of the Faithful' because he did not accept ʿAlī as caliph. So the scribe scratched it out. When the agreement was finished, ʿAmr came up with yet another trick. He convinced Abū Mūsá that both ʿAlī and Muʿāwiyah were wrong to fight each other, causing division of the Muslims, that they should both be renounced as caliph. Abū Mūsá agreed. When they were ready to leave the tent and announce their decision to the people, ʿAmr pretended to be respectful to the elder Abū Mūsá and said, "You go first…" Abū Mūsá announced to the people that he, as the chosen arbitrator, has decided to renounce ʿAlī as caliph. Then when it was ʿAmr's turn to renounce Muʿāwiyah, ʿAmr showed his true colors and said, "I pledge my allegiance to Muʿāwiyah as caliph!" The army of the believers was confused, and the Muʿāwiyah's army all hooted and hollered in celebration. Abū Mūsá realized that he was tricked. Ashamed, he got on his horse and rode away.

When ʿAlī saw the treaty, he said, "This is just like what happened to the Messenger of God at Ḥudaybīyah." Muʿāwiyah and his people were overjoyed. The believers who were loyal to ʿAlī were heartbroken. The fools in ʿAlī's army who did not listen to ʿAlī were confused. Since the battle started, thousands of believers were killed. Now it was all for nothing. Those same fools who didn't listen to their caliph when ʿAlī warned them not to fall for Muʿāwiyah's tricks, now blamed ʿAlī for agreeing to the arbitrators to judge in the first place. They started yelling "Only God can judge!" Now they accused ʿAlī of being responsible for all the senseless bloodshed. They even accused him of being an unbeliever! They cursed both Muʿāwiyah and ʿAlī, threatening to kill both of them. They rode off, yelling "Only God can judge!" over and over. They became known as Khārijīs (The 'Leavers,' the ones who left, the ones who went outside the main group).

The two armies separated from the battlefield. Muʿāwiyah and his people, the same people who were Muḥammad's worst enemies and who were cursed by Muḥammad, the same people who used ʿUthmān and even admitted responsibility for getting ʿUthmān killed, the same people who put ʿĀ'ishah in danger by sending her to the middle of a battlefield, now succeeded in dividing ʿAlī's army. Through their trickery and deceit, not only did they prevent the caliph from winning the battle just as he was about to succeed, but they managed to turn people in his own army against

him. Even worse, without the caliph's involvement, they connived to get an agreement that basically renounced ʿAlī's legitimacy as caliph and recognized Muʿāwiyah's authority over the territories he usurped from the legitimate caliph. Muʿāwiyah kept control of Syria and Palestine, where he governed from his luxurious palace in Damascus. For all practical purposes, the community was now split.

What was worse, Muʿāwiyah began to claim that *he* was now the legitimate caliph of all Muslims. When ʿAlī heard this, he cursed Muʿāwiyah and his people just as Muḥammad did during his lifetime. Muʿāwiyah continued to officially blame ʿAlī for killing ʿUthmān. In addition to this outright lie against against ʿAlī, Muʿāwiyah also instituted a vile new practice against the person about whom the Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Whoever hurts ʿAlī has hurt me," and "Whoever curses ʿAlī has cursed me." Every Friday, during the sermon for congregational prayers, Muʿāwiyah, cursed ʿAlī publicly from the pulpit. Muʿāwiyah commanded all prayer leaders in all congregations in his territories to curse ʿAlī from the pulpits during their Friday sermons. In Muʿāwiyah's territories all the prayer leaders appointed by Muʿāwiyah even added cursing ʿAlī to the the daily prayers.

When ʿAlī heard that Muʿāwiyah had declared himself the caliph, he started to get his army ready to go attack Syria. The son of Abū Sufyān and his cannibal wife, the son of Muḥammad's worst enemy, the son of the man who attacked, tortured, and killed the believers, the son of the man who attempted to assassinate Muḥammad, the son of the man who organized, financed, and led wars against Muḥammad and the beleivers, the son of the woman who hired the assassination of Muḥammad's beloved uncle and protector, Ḥamzah, the son of the woman who cannibalized Ḥamzah's liver, the son of the woman who desecrated Ḥamzah's body, and danced with joy as she wore a necklace made of his ears, nose, fingers and toes, the son raised by those vile parents, and who himself fought wars against the legitimate Rightly Guided Caliph and the believers, now claimed that *he* was the caliph of the Muslims! Meanwhile, some Khārijīs met in secret and hatched a plan to kill both Muʿāwiyah and ʿAlī. They sent assassins in both directions: one went to Damascus to the palace where Muʿāwiyah sat on his throne and another went towards Kūfah, where ʿAlī was taking care of the children orphaned from the recent wars instigated by Muʿāwiyah. In Damascus, Muʿāwiyah imitated the practices of the Christians of the Byzantine Empire. He established a royal guard as his private bodyguards,

and he was the first to build a special defensive prayer niche (*miḥrāb*) which he used when he lead the prayers, fearful of his own congregation. He led prayers in the defended pit, surrounded by his royal guards all around him and behind him. When the Khārijī assassin attempted to get closer to Mūʿāwiyah, he was quickly captured and killed.

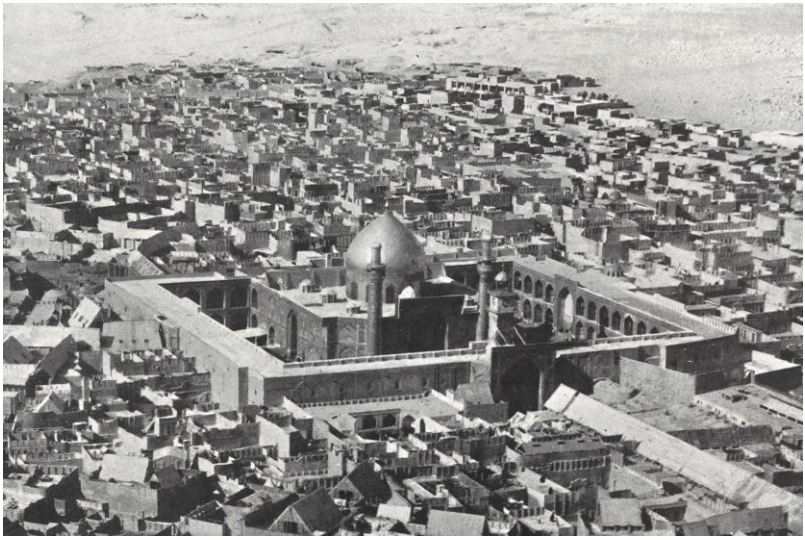
ʿAlī was a man of the people. He prayed with his congregation. One morning, as ʿAlī was leading the dawn prayer, a Khārijī who snuck into the congregation came up behind him and stabbed him. The Khārijī was caught and brought to the bleeding caliph. Till the very end, ʿAlī stood for justice. He ordered that the Khārijī should only be punished if he (ʿAlī) died from the attack. If he (ʿAlī) survived the stabbing, he would decide what to do with the attacker. The injuries were severe. While Abū Sufyān and his wicked family cared only for the gold, power, and pleasures of this world, ʿAlī lived a humble life, according to the practice of God's Prophet, giving his wealth to the poor and orphans, and choosing to sacrifice for God and His messenger. Among his last words, as he lay wounded and bleeding, ʿAlī said, "*Fuztu wa rabb al-kaʿbah*!" (By the Lord of the Kaʿbah, *I* am the winner!)[35]

The ʿAlī who was raised from childhood by the Messenger of God, and who, along with Khadījah, was the first to believe in the Message; the ʿAlī, who, still a child, bravely slept in the Prophet's bed and dressed in Muḥammad's clothes as a decoy when Muʿāwiyah's father Abū Sufyan tried to assassinate Muḥammad; the same ʿAlī who fought bravely defending the Prophet at Badr, where Muʿāwiyah's father attacked Muḥammad and Muʿāwiyah's mother ate the liver of Muḥammad's uncle; the same ʿAlī whom the Prophet chose to marry his beloved daughter, Fāṭimah, and who was the father of Muḥammad's beloved grandchildren; the same ʿAlī who took personal care of the many children who were orphaned as a result of Muʿāwiyah and his allies' wars against the legitimate and Rightly Guided Caliph; the ʿAlī who was the bravest warrior among the believers, who never lost in single combat and earned the nickname *Asad Allāh* (the Lion of God); who spent his whole life dedicated to Muḥammad's Message of worship of the One God of Abraham, returned to his Lord. He was buried in a cemetery just outside of Kūfah, in an area called Najaf. The shrine marking his burial site is visited by millions of believers who come to pay their respects to the man who was raised by the Prophet like his own son,

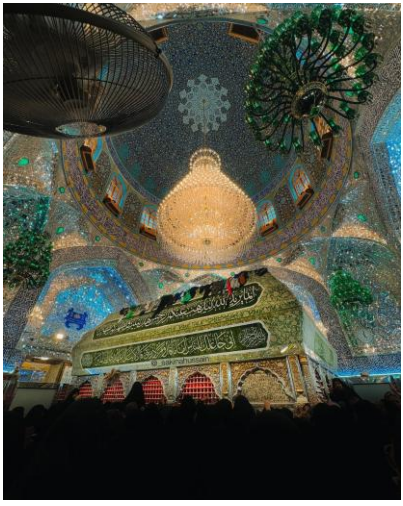
[35] In other words, the winner is not the one who gets the gold and riches and positions of power. The *real* winner is the one who has gained the pleasure of Almighty God.

who served his entire life devoted to the Qurʿān and the sunnah (practice) of the Messenger of God, and who defended and protected the unity of the Islamic community until his last breath.

To this day, all Muslims respect ʿAlī for his unique place among the companions of the Prophet. To this day, no one considers Muʿāwiyah, who went against the *jamāʿah* (consensus) and selfishly split the Muslim community apart for his own personal gain, to be a rightly-guided caliph. Those who respect ʿAlī's attempts to keep Muḥammad's community united all agree that ʿAlī was the legitimate caliph, not Muʿāwiyah. That is why, to this day, the believers still refer to ʿAlī as *Amīr al-Muʾminīn* (Commander of the Faithful).



The Mosque of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Najaf, Iraq, 1945.



A more recent image of the mosque (left) with the believers preparing for congregational prayer, and a view of the tomb of ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib beneath the dome (right).

III

THE QUR‘ĀN & SUNNAH

4

ḤASAN *AL-MUJTABÁ* (THE CHOSEN ONE)

Just like his father Abū Sufyān and his cannibal mother, who refused to obey the commands of God and His messenger, Muʿāwiyah refused to obey the commands of the Rightly Guided Caliph. Using lies and deceit to blame ʿAlī for the death of ʿUthmān, then hiring an army to fight against the legitimate caliph, then hiding behind pages of the Qurʾān to deceive the believers, Muʿāwiyah managed to divide the unity of the Muslims and to hold on to his power in Syria. Just as he used the death of ʿUthmān to his advantage, and put ʿĀʾishah's life in danger to his advantage, now Muʿāwiyah seized upon the death of ʿAlī to steal the caliphate for himself.

The worst enemies of Islam, and the sons of the worst enemies of Islam, cursed by Muḥammad during his lifetime, ran away from their government positions all over the Islamic caliphate to join Muʿāwiyah in Syria. Meanwhile, the believers who supported ʿAlī as the Rightly Guided Caliph now gave allegiance to his son Ḥasan, the beloved grandson of the Messenger of God. Ḥasan insisted that he would only accept their allegiance if they followed him, whether in war or in peace. Now that ʿAlī was out of Muʿāwiyah's way, Muʿāwiyah saw his chance to claim the caliphate all for himself. Even though the *jamāʿah* (majority) accepted Ḥasan as caliph, Muʿāwiyah continued to go against the *jamāʿah*. Muʿāwiyah and his band of rebels refused to give allegiance to Ḥasan as caliph, just as they refused to recognize ʿAlī's caliphate. Muʿāwiyah gathered his army of rebels and marched to Iraq. Along the way, he sent messages to Ḥasan trying to convince him to abdicate the caliphate. Ḥasan gathered an army of the people who just gave him allegiance. As Muʿāwiyah's army approached, Ḥasan's army began to scatter in all directions. The scene turned to chaos. People started pillaging from each other. The people in Ḥasan's own army even attacked Ḥasan's tent and started pillaging his belongings. Someone

knocked him over and stole the carpet he was sitting on. Another person stole his sandals. Someone stabbed Ḥasan. Ḥasan ran for his life. He found some loyal followers of his father, ʿAlī, and of his grandfather, the Messenger of God, and they protected him. Realizing that the people could not be relied upon, Ḥasan sent a message to Muʿāwiyah offering peace, with conditions. It was exactly what Muʿāwiyah was hoping for. Ḥasan offered peace, on three conditions: 1) that Muʿāwiyah ruled by the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Messenger of God, 2) that Muʿāwiyah stop cursing ʿAlī and stop persecuting ʿAlī's followers, and 3) that Muʿāwiyah promise not to appoint his son as the next caliph, instead, defering to the *shūrá* (consultation and consensus) of the community as commanded by the Qurʾān. Muʿāwiyah agreed to all conditions without hesitation. All he wanted was the official recognition of being the uncontested caliph of all the Islamic lands. This year came to be known as "the year of *jamāʿah* (togetherness)." After years of civil war, it was the first time that the community was at peace. Ḥasan and his brother Ḥusayn, the first children born in Islam, and the beloved grandchildren of the Prophet, rode back home to Madīnah.

Muʿāwiyah went back to his palace in Damascus and announced that he was now officially the new caliph. As soon as he got the recognition he wanted, Muʿāwiyah began breaking all of the promises he had agreed to in the treaty. He ordered his governors to continue cursing ʿAlī in the mosques. Anyone who refused to curse ʿAlī or who defended ʿAlī was persecuted, their money and propery confiscated, and many were killed. In Madīnah, even in the mosque of the Prophet, the very place where ʿAlī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn lived with the Messenger of God as one family, Muʿāwiyah's governor stood on the Prophet's pulpit and cursed ʿAlī and his followers. Ḥasan realized Muʿāwiyah had no intention of ever keeping his promises in the peace agreement. Muʿāwiyah had tricked him. He was now powerless to do anything. His only choices were to restart a war against Muʿāwiyah, or be patient to see what God had in store. He stopped participating in the congregations where ʿAlī and his followers were being cursed in the prayers and in the sermons.

Soon after the peace agreement, Ḥasan was poisoned under mysterious circumstances. There is little doubt who was the hand behind Ḥasan's poisoning. The same people who saw Muḥammad's message of justice as a threat to their wealth and power, the same wicked people who tried to kill Muḥammad and who cannibalized his uncle's liver, the same people who refused to recognize ʿAlī because ʿAlī continued the tradition of

Muḥammad, now wanted Ḥasan, who carried and defended the pure message of his grandfather, the Messenger of God, out of their way. One by one, the wicked family of Muḥammad's worst enemies eliminated Muḥammad's beloved family, who dedicated their lives to preserving and propagating the Qur'ān and the Message of One God. First Muḥammad's beloved daughter, Fāṭimah, then the boy Muḥammad raised as his own son and the first male believer, and now Muḥammad's beloved grandson, the first child born in Islam.

Ḥasan's final days were torturously painful. The poison made him bleed profusely. His life was literally draining out of him. He vomited up large chunks of his insides. Every time they put a basin by his bed, it filled up so quickly they had to have another basin to replace it right away. The beloved grandson of he Messenger of God got weaker and weaker. The one who was hugged and kissed by the Prophet, who played in the Prophet's lap, who climbed up on the Prophet's back while he prayed with his forehead to the ground, the one loved by the Messenger of God, and whom the Messenger of God commanded us to love, suffered painfully with each passing moment. Near the end, Ḥasan asked that they move his bed outside so that he could look up at the night sky and marvel at God's Majesty one last time. The beloved grandson of Muḥammad, the first baby born in Islam, the one whom Muḥammad used to carry on his shoulders and say, "O, God, I love him, so You love him too,"[36] the one whom the Prophet used to hug in his arms and say, "Whoever loves me, must love Ḥasan also,"[37] returned to his Lord in his hometown of Madīnah. He was buried next to the Prophet's paternal uncle, ʿAbbās, in the Baqīʿ al-Gharqad cemetery, in the year 50 AH.

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[36] Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:33 #3749, 7:204 #5884; Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:129 #6409, 6410, 7:130 #6411, 6412.

[37] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad*, 38:192 #23106; *Faḍāʾil al-ṣaḥābah*, 2:780 #1387; Ibn Abī Shaybah ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, *al-Muṣannaf*, 12:99 #32852; Abū Nuʿaym Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Iṣfahānī, *Maʿrifat al-ṣaḥābah*, 21:478 #6588; Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrak*, 3:173 #4806.

The grave of the Prophet's paternal uncle, ʿAbbās, along with the Prophet's grandson Ḥasan, the first baby born in Islam. Next to him are: ʿAlī the son of Ḥusayn (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, generation #3), Muḥammad al-Bāqir (the great-great grandson of Muḥammad, and his son, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (the great-great-great grandson of Muḥammad and the teacher of both Imām Mālik ibn Anas, eponymous founder of the Mālikī school of thought, and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, eponymous founder of the Ḥanafī school of thought).

5

ḤUSAYN, THE MARTYR OF KARBALĀ'

Over the next decade, Muʿāwiyah continued to consolidate his power. He continued to appoint members of the same circle of vile people who were Muḥammad's worst enemies to positions of power throughout the caliphate. They served as administrators, governors, secretaries, tax collectors, and military leaders. Muʿāwiyah ordered them to continue his policy of targeting and persecuting the followers of ʿAlī all over the caliphate. He persecuted anyone who refused to curse ʿAlī. They were beaten and tortured. Their money and their property were confiscated. He killed ʿAlī's main supporters. Muʿāwiyah continued to curse ʿAlī, and commanded the cursing of ʿAlī in every sermon from every pulpit in every mosque, and even in congregational prayers. The reign of terror that he executed as governor of his local lands in Syria, now he expanded all over the caliphate. He began to groom his son, Yazīd, as his successor. All these were the exact opposite of the three things Muʿāwiyah had agreed to in the peace treaty with Ḥasan that resulted in Muʿāwiyah becoming caliph.

Muʿāwiyah began ruling Muslims as a king instead of as a caliph. He imitated the practices of the Byzantine Empire, whose territories he ruled ever since he was appointed governor of Damasacus, in Syria. There he consolidated his power and built up an army in imitation of Byzantine imperial style. There are no kings in Islam. Muḥammad never made himself a king. None of the Rightly Guided Caliphs ever made themselves kings. Instead of following the example of the Messenger of God and the Rightly Guided Caliphs, Muʿāwiyah looked up to and imitated the example of the Byzantine Empire (The Holy Roman Empire). He was the first caliph to live in luxury, surrounded by gold and silk. He was the first to live in a palace. He built multiple 'pleasure palaces' as vacation homes away from his capital. He was the first to have bodyguards to protect him from the people he ruled. He was the first to build a secure *miḥrāb* (prayer niche) to protect him from being attacked during the prayers. He was the first to imitate the

empires around Arabia instead of the *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet. He was the first to rule as a king and to start a line of kingship in Islam.

Eleven years after agreeing to the treaty in the "year of *jamāʿah* (togetherness)," Muʿāwiyah fell ill. He took the unprecedented and un-Islamic step of appointing his son as the next caliph and king. All previous caliphs were chosen by the *jamāʿah* (majority consensus) of the believers through the qurʾānic process of *shūrá* (consultation), and none of the other caliphs (neither Abū Bakr, nor ʿUmar, nor ʿUthmān, nor ʿAlī) ever appointed their children to be the next ruler against the Qurʾān and against the will of the people. In fact, one of the stipulations in the peace treaty that made Muʿāwiyah caliph, the peace treaty that he agreed with the chosen caliph at the time, was that Muʿāwiyah agree to let the people choose the caliph after him and *not* appoint his son himself. Ḥasan agreed to step down as caliph and allow Muʿāwiyah the caliphate on that condition (among others). After the treaty, Muʿāwiyah broke all the other agreements he made to gain power, and now he was also going against this stipulation that he had agreed to. Muʿāwiyah instituted an unprecedented and un-islamic dynastic succession in Islam.

Yazid was Muʿāwiyah's son from a non-Muslim mother. He was raised by her and members of her tribe. He was not raised by Muslims or with Islamic teachings. He was the young son of the wealthy and power-hungry Muʿāwiyah in Syria, who was himself the young son of the wealthy and power-hungry Abū Sufyān and Hind in Makkah. These were the same Abū Sufyān who was the main enemy of Muḥammad and his message, who attempted to assassinate Muḥammad, and who fought wars against him and the believers; and the same cannibal Hind who assassinated Muḥammad's defender and uncle, Ḥamzah, then ate his liver and sang and danced in celebration as she wore a necklace that she made from cutting off his ears, noes, fingers, and toes. Muʿāwiyah was the son born to this abonimable couple. He was born of his father's unchaste loins and her lecherous womb. He was suckled on the impure breastmilk of that vile cannibal woman. His young muscles and bones grew from her sinful milk and his childhood education was in this household obsessed with worldly pleasures, wealth, and power. Muʿāwiyah, whose name means "little barking dog," was the young, spoiled child of that unholy union. He grew up surrounded by wine and singing girls and slaves, in wealth and luxury acquired from injustices accumulated off the backs of the poor, the needy, and the enslaved. And Yazīd was the young, spoiled grandchild of that family. Growing up in the

lap of luxury, in his father's pleasure palaces, surrounded by wine and dancing women, he was raised in Syria by his mother's non-Muslim tribe, without knowledge of the Qur'ān or prayer or Ramaḍān or the sanctity of the Holy House of God in Makkah, or of the Prophet and his family in Madīnah.

One thing Yazīd certainly had knowledge of was that his grandfather Abū Sufyān, the leader of the pagan idol-worhippers of Makkah, and his grandmother Hind, the cannibal who ate human liver and made necklaces of human ears and noses, fingers and toes, were the number one enemies of Muḥammad. Yazīd certainly had knowledge that his father, Muʿāwiyah, was the number one enemy of the one who was raised by Muḥammad and Muḥammad's noble wife Khadījah as their own son: ʿAlī. Yazīd grew up as a child learning of his family's hatred for the family of the Prophet, hearing that his family was cursed by the Prophet, and knowing full well that the Prophet and his blessed family, and their total devotion to God's Message, were the greatest threat to his own family and their way of life.

Unlike Abū Sufyān, his wife Hind, their son Muʿāwiyah and his son, Yazīd, who were raised in paganism, cannibalism, luxury, and sinful pleasures, the Prophet and his blessed family were raised in the pure faith of Abraham, belief in the One God, chastity, purity, care for orphans, the poor and needy, freeing the slaves, and justice. Muḥammad, the blessed Messenger of God, who lived a simple, humble lifestyle and who raised his blessed daughter, Fāṭimah, and who raised ʿAlī in the same way, and who gave away the wealth that came his way to the poor, the orphans, the needy, lived in a way that was the exact opposite of Abū Sufyān, Hind, Muʿāwiyah, and Yazīd. That is exactly why, after the Prophet's death, when ʿAlī was chosen as caliph, all of the worst enemies of the Prophet ran away to Syria to join Muʿāwiyah. When the first children born in Islam were born, Muḥammad, his beloved Fāṭimah and her husband ʿAlī, raised Ḥasan and Ḥusayn in the same way. This first family of Islam lived dedicated to the way of God, practicing what they preached. And Muḥammad made it very clear to all the believers that his family should be loved and respected just as he was loved and respected. He made it clear to all the believers that anyone who disrespected or upset or angered or hurt his family also disrespected and upset and angered and hurt *him*. Just as Abū Sufyān and the cannibal Hind, who were cursed by the Prophet, disrespected, upset, angered, hurt the Prophet, they and their companions did the same to his beloved daughter, Fāṭimah. Just as Abū Sufyān and his cannibal wife were

threatened by the Prophet's Message and tried to kill the Prophet, their son Muʿāwiyah was threatened by the same Message and tried to kill ʿAlī. And now, just as his grandfather Abū Sufyān and his father Muʿāwiyah, saw the pure message of Islam as a threat to their hunger for power, wealth, and decadent luxury, Yazīd now saw the pure message of Islam as a threat to his rule.

As his illness worsened, he called his son, Yazīd to the palace. Yazīd, who spent his time living in luxury at his father's many pleasure palaces, cavorting with dancing girls and drinking wine, received the message. Having grown up in his mother's family, he was surrounded by advisers from their tribe. He came to the palace in Damascus, knowing that he would soon be king. Muʿāwiyah knew that his spoiled son who slept on silk sheets and spent his days drinking expensive wine and fooling around with dancing girls, was unfit for leadership of the Muslims. Muʿāwiyah knew that his son Yazīd would never be chosen if people were allowed to choose. So Muʿāwiyah unilaterally appointed Yazīd as the next king and started, for the first time in the history of Islam, a dynastic succession of kings. Near the end of the year 60 AH, the son of the marriage between Muḥammad's worst enemy and the woman who cannibalized the liver of Muḥammad's uncle, died in his luxurious palace in Syria.

Before he died, Muʿāwiyah warned his son Yazīd not to harm Ḥusayn. Ḥasan's brother, Ḥusayn, was the second child born in Islam and the other beloved grandson of Muḥammad. He was raised in the Prophet's lap and on his shoulders and in his loving arms. He was the last surviving member of Muḥammad's direct family, who grew up with Muḥammad and lived with him, and who continued to carry the Message of the One God. Muʿāwiyah was a shrewd politician. He was very skillful in manipulating situations to his political advantage. This was evident in the way that Muʿāwiyah used ʿUthmān, then left him to die without sending soldiers to protect him when ʿUthmān requested emergency backup. This was obvious in the way Muʿāwiyah used ʿĀ'ishah to attack ʿAlī once the *jamāʿah* (majority) chose ʿAlī as caliph, putting her life in danger. This was clear when Muʿāwiyah, seeing ʿAlī's army of believers winning and his life on the line, hid behind pages of the Qurʾān as a trick to divide the believers. Over and over again, he was always willing to sacrifice others just to save his own life. Muʿāwīyah was a shrewd, cunning, deceiver with a lifetime of experience manipulating the believers for his own political advantage. He learned well from his parents. Muʿāwiyah was truly the son of Abū Sufyān and his

cannibal wife, who, even at the last moment when they surrendered their allegiance, audaciously admitted that they still did not believe that Muḥammad was the Messenger of God.

But Yazīd had none of his father's political savvy. He was a spoiled, entitled little prince who grew up in luxury and never heard the word "no" in his life. He lived a life drowned in wine and women. He knew nothing of the Qur'ān, of prayers, of Ramaḍan, or of pilgrimage to the Holy House of God in Makkah. The pampered little prince who now believed he was king knew that he was not even remotely qualified to be the leader of the Muslims from an Islamic perspective. Yazīd did not care. Since when did qualifications have anything to do with leadership? He inherited his father's governors, all the enemies of Muḥammad who allied with Abū Sufyān and only submitted to the Prophet at the last moment. He had his family loyalists in positions of power everywhere, the same vile people who abused ʿUthmān and got him killed. He had control over everyone. He inherited his father's vast network of spies who had eyes and ears in every corner of every city. He could monitor anyone. He inherited from his father the wealth of all the lands from the borders of Europe to the borders of China. He could bribe anyone. He inherited an enormous army that his father bought and trained in the tactics of the Byzantine Empire. He could slaughter anyone. And now he had the throne.

Yazīd immediately sent a secret message to the governor of Madīnah. In the middle of the night, keeping Muʿāwiyah's death a secret from the public, Yazīd commanded the governor of Madīnah (his cousin) to call upon three people immediately: Ḥusayn (son of ʿAlī and grandson of Muḥammad), ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubayr (son of the Zubayr who, like ʿĀ'ishah, was tricked into fighting against ʿAlī), and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar (son of ʿUmar, the second Rightly Guided Caliph). The message ordered the governor to obtain their allegiance to Yazīd immediately and in secret, before the people woke up in the morning and before anyone knew that Muʿāwiyah was dead. The governor sought advice from Marwān ibn Ḥakam, who was in Madīnah. Marwān was the son of Ḥakam, the man who pretended to be Muslim and moved to Madīnah, then spied on the Prophet to provide Islam's enemies with information. He was the one who was caught, cursed by Muḥammad, and banished from Madīnah forever. His accursed son was the "advisor" to ʿUthmān who kept getting ʿUthmān in trouble, and eventually got ʿUthmān killed. Now this same Marwān whose family was cursed by the Prophet was advising Yazīd's governor in

Madīnah. Marwān said to bring them in, demand their allegiance, and kill them if they try to leave without giving allegiance.

ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubayr asked Ḥusayn what he thought of the suspicious invitation to the governor's house in the middle of the night. Ḥusayn informed him that there could only be one reason: the tyrant (Muʿāwiyah) was dead. ʿAbd Allāh ibn Zubayr locked himself in his home and did not open the door for anyone, then, when he had a chance, he left town and went to Makkah. ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar said he would give his allegiance whenever everyone else did. Ḥusayn went to the governor's house with 40 of his trusted companions, all on horseback, and all well-armed. He answered the governor's call politely. The governor read out Yazīd's letter and demanded Ḥusayn's allegiance. Ḥusayn said that making secret allegiances in the middle of the night is not the proper Islamic way of doing things. In the morning, when the people of Madīnah all awakened, the governor should make an official announcement that Muʿāwiyah was dead, and ask everyone who it was that they wanted to be the new caliph, and the *jamāʿah* (majority of the community) would then give allegiance to whomever they choose as the new caliph. The governor agreed. Marwān, whose father and family was cursed by the Prophet, intervened and told the governor to demand immediate allegiance from Ḥusayn, or else kill him on the spot. The threats of violence made Ḥusayn angry. He reminded Marwān to his face that Marwān and his father were both liars and sinners who were cursed by the Prophet. Then Ḥusayn got on his horse and left the governor's house. The next morning, there was no public announcement or call for the community to choose their next leader or to give allegiance.

Ḥusayn gathered his family and went to Makkah. After some time, word got out that Muʿāwiyah was dead. While in Makkah, Ḥusayn prepared for the upcoming annual Ḥajj pilgrimage. The people were leaderless. Only the *shīʿah* (followers) of Muʿāwiyah in Syria and his corrupt administrators supported Yazīd, because they knew he would continue his father's corrupt policies that made them rich and powerful. The rest of the Muslim world was in limbo. Letters were sent to Ḥusayn from the people of Iraq inviting him to come to them. Ḥusayn did not respond. More and more letters came. Once there were bags full of letters, Ḥusayn sent a single response to all. He said that he was sending his cousin, Muslim ibn ʿAqīl,[38] as his representative to scout the situation and report back. Muslim

[38] Muslim was the son of ʿAqīl. ʿAqīl an ʿAlī were the sons of Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet's uncle. ʿAqīl was the older brother of ʿAlī.

immediately left for Iraq. When he got to the city of Kūfah, the residents gave Muslim a warm welcome. He went to the main mosque and the people gathered to hear him speak from the pulpit. He explained to them why he was there, that they sent letter after letter to Ḥusayn inviting him to come to them, and that Ḥusayn sent him to see how serious they were. More and more people gathered to him pledging their support for Ḥusayn. Seeing the peoples' reaction, Muslim ibn ʿAqīl sent a letter to Ḥusayn explaining the situation and urging Ḥusayn to hurry to Iraq.

Even though Muʿāwiyah claimed the caliphate after the peace treaty with Ḥasan, he was never able to subdue the people of Iraq as he wanted. They were rebellious and unruly. Muʿāwiyah did not push his luck with them. As long as they paid their taxes and did not war against him, he let them be. But Yazīd was not that intelligent. He was a drunkard and a brute. Yazīd knew that Muslims would never choose someone like him as leader. Only the people of Syria, where Muʿāwiyah ruled for decades by lavishing wealth on his loyal base of supporters, would agree to such a thing. Abū Sufyān fought against Muḥammad because he knew that the Message of Islam was a threat to his wealth and power, and that Muḥammad could never be bought, or bribed or threatened to give up the Message. The same pagans who allied with Abū Sufyān against Muḥammad then allied themselves with Abū Sufyān's son, Muʿāwiyah, against the boy that Muḥammad and Khadījah raised as their own son (ʿAlī). And for the same reason: They all knew that ʿAlī, just like Muḥammad, would defend the Message of Islam with his last breath and with the last drop of blood in his veins. Muʿāwiyah and his father's friends all knew that ʿAlī, just like Muḥammad, could never be bought, bribed, or threatened to give up the Message of the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet. And now Yazīd, just like his father and the pagans who supported his grandfather, knew that Ḥusayn was the last living remnant of the Message of Muḥammad. The grandson of the Messenger of God, who was born in and grew up in the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of his grandfather, the last living member of Muḥammad's family after the death of his daughter, Fāṭimah, after the assassination of his adopted son, ʿAlī, and after the poisoning of his grandson Ḥasan, the first baby born in Islam; now Ḥusayn, the second baby born in Islam and the other beloved grandson of the Prophet, was the last remaining living threat to the family of Abū Sufyān's domination of all Muslims. Muḥammad's pure blood ran in Ḥusayn's veins. Muḥammad's pure breath filled Ḥusayn's lungs. Muḥammad's pure kisses

covered Ḥusayn's face. Muḥammad's pure teachings came from Ḥusayn's lips and Ḥusayn lived his life according to Muḥammad's pure *sunnah* (tradition). Ḥusayn was the living embodiment of the pure Message of Islam preached by his grandfather the Messenger of God, who raised him. Ḥusayn could not be bought or bribed or coerced into looking the other way as people around him ignored the commands of the Qur'ān and opposed the *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet. The Qurān commands to "encourage the good and forbid evil" and Ḥusayn, like his mother and father before him, and like his grandfather, the Messenger of God, would never give up the qur'ānic message. Ḥusayn's very existence was a threat to anyone who lusted for worldy wealth and power and wanted to twist the Message for personal gain.

Yazīd's spies informed him that Ḥusayn left Madīnah for Makkah. The annual Ḥajj pilgrimage season was about to begin. It was a time when people from all over the Islamic world gathered in Makkah. Ḥajj is like an annual Islamic convention. Yazīd was afraid that Ḥusayn, the pure grandson of the Messenger of God, would attract supporters from around the Islamic lands. Yazīd gathered some of the strongest assassins and ordered them to kill Ḥusayn no matter what. The same Ḥusayn whose gradfather, the Messenger of God, liberated Makkah from the heathen pagans led by Yazīd's grandfather, now Yazīd ordered to be killed wherever they find him, even if he is clinging to the holy Kaʿbah at the center of the sacred sanctuary in Makkah. When Muḥammad returned to Makkah, instead of killing Abū Sufyān and his cannibal wife for the horrible things they did, starving, torturing, and killing so many believers, Muḥammad mercifully allowed them to be free instead of being taken prisoner or killing them for revenge. Now the alcoholic and un-Islamic grandson of that unholy couple sought the death of the pure and beloved grandchild of Muḥammad, who was guilty of nothing but calling for Muslims to follow the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of his grandfather, the Messenger of God. Yazīd's assassins went to Makkah dressed in the white cloth of pilgrims, but carried daggers under their pilgrim garb, waiting for their chance to kill Ḥusayn. Meanwhile, Muslim's letter from Iraq reached Ḥusayn in Makkah. Ḥusayn had intended to perform the Ḥajj pilgrimage, but, knowing that Yazīd would have no respect for the sacred sanctuary and would not hesitate to violate the sanctity of the holy House of God, Ḥusayn told his followers that he did not want any blood spilled in the holy sanctuary. He gathered his family and started towards Iraq.

Meanwhile, Yazīd's spies informed him that Muslim ibn ʿAqīl was in Kūfah and that people there were pledging allegiance to Ḥusayn. In addition to the assassins Yazīd sent to kill Ḥusayn in Makkah, Yazīd also sent an urgent letter to his governor in nearby Baṣrah, to take control of Kūfah immediately. This governor was the son of a bastard. The bastard was known as "Ziyād, son of his father" because no one knew who his father was. Muʿāwiyah bought Ziyād's loyalty by making up a story about how his own father, Abū Sufyān committed adultery with Ziyād's mother, so that made them brothers. The son of this bastard who became loyal to Muʿāwiyah in exchange for 'giving' him a father, was appointed Muʿāwiyah's governor in Baṣrah, and now went to nearby Kūfah as ordered by Yazīd. As he approached the city, he kept his head covered. People thought he was Ḥusayn and all gathered to welcome him. He went with the crowd to the main mosque and sat atop the pulpit. Then he uncovered his face and announced that he was the new governor sent by Yazīd. He demanded obedience and declared that he would rule with an iron fist. The people scattered in fear.

The new governor immediately started to hunt down Muslim ibn ʿAqīl. Muslim was staying at the house of one of the nobles of the city. The governor called the noble to the palace. There he interrogated him, beat him, and put him in the dungeon. Muslim and thousands of supporters marched towards the palace to save him. The governor had only 30 guards with him. He barricaded the doors and addressed the crowd from the roof. He said that a huge army was coming from Syria. It was a bluff, there was no army coming, but the trick worked. The people became frightened. At the same time, he also bribed the chiefs of the tribes with promises of gold. Little by little, the crowd dispersed. The people who pledged their loyalty just a whor while earlier now began to abandon Muslim. Before long, there were only a few people left. The palace doors opened and the guards came out. Muslim ran into the streets looking for somewhere to hide. No one would give Muslim shelter. The same people who earlier said they supported Muslim and Ḥusayn now were either bought by gold or afraid of the huge army they thought was coming. There was a house to house search in the night. Muslim left where he was hiding and tried to escape. He was cornered. He fought to defend himself. He was surrounded and beaten bloody until he could no longer resist, and was captured. They brought him to the palace. He knew he was about to be killed, so he said to at least allow him to give his last will and testament. Muslim willed three things: he listed

his unpaid debts, he asked that his body be given a proper burial, and he said to inform Ḥusayn of exactly what happened to him so Ḥusayn would know that the people of Kūfah are disloyal liars. The governor ordered that Muslim be taken to the roof of the palace, his head cut off, and his body thrown to the street. He ordered the tribal elder who let Muslim stay in his home to be taken to the livestock market and killed there. The governor displayed their heads at the palace. Yazīd commended the governor on 'a job well done!' and instructed him to prepare for Ḥusayn's arrival.

Ḥusayn was already on his way to Iraq when the news reached him about the capture and execution of Muslim ibn ʿAqīl. The news was heartbreaking. The sons of Muslim, who were with Ḥusayn in the caravan, mourned the loss of their father. Yazīd's governor had killed one of the best of the Prophet's companions and relatives. Some people in the caravan told Ḥusayn to turn back. Others feared for their lives. In those days, people often traveled together for protection from bandits and highway robbers. There were many people who joined Ḥusayn's caravan to Iraq who had nothing to do with Ḥusayn. They were just traveling for business or to visit family or for other reasons. Ḥusayn gathered everyone together and told them that this news made things very clear: Yazīd, the grandson of the pagan Abū Sufyān who tried to kill Muḥammad, and the son of the power-hungry Muʿāwīyah who went against the *jamāʿah* (majority) and tried to kill ʿAlī, clearly cares nothing for the Qurʾān or for Islam or for the will of the the *jamāʿah* (majority). He was a ruthless tyrant who inherited his father's network of corrupt governors and now believed himself to be above the laws of God, above the Qurʾān, and above the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet. He murdered, assassinated, and executed anyone who might oppose his un-Islamic rule. He ordered his governors to capture and execute anyone who questioned his illegitimate authority. Ḥusayn said to the people gathered in the caravan that night that his journey will certainly end in death. Ḥusayn did not want bloodshed. He encouraged everyone who joined the caravan for safety reasons, to save themselves. Little by little, people began leaving the caravan and going off on their own. The group traveling with Ḥusayn became smaller and smaller. Ḥusayn's family, the family of the Prophet, the grandchildren and great grandchildren of the Messenger of God, continued towards Iraq.

If Yazīd were allowed to hijack the caliphate and Muslims were no longer allowed to decide their leader by *shūrá* (consultation) based on the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet, then the word 'caliph' would lose

all meaning. Yazīd was a drunk and a womanizer who knew nothing of the Qurʿān or the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet, yet he claimed to be the leader of the Muslim community. He was not chosen by the people, yet he claimed to be king based on inheritance of the throne from his father. Like his father Muʿāwiyah, and like every corrupt power-monger before them, Yazīd and his governors used threats and bribery to get hold of power, and to keep hold of it. They were the same techniques used by every ruler whose rule was not based on truth, justice, and the support of the people. Ḥusayn was not one who could be bribed or threatened. Ḥusayn was the beloved grandson of the Prophet, raised in the Prophet's lap. From the very first breath he took when he came out of his blessed mother's womb, Ḥusayn lived and breathed the Message of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* (practice) of his grandfather, the Messenger of God. Ḥusayn was the last surviving member of the Prophet's family who was raised by the Prophet himself. Raised on the pure milk of the pure daughter of the Prophet of God, showered with pure kisses from the Prophet's pure lips, Ḥusayn grew up witnessing with his own eyes the verses of the Qurʾān being revealed to his grandfather. He grew up living and witnessing the *sunnah* (practice) of the Messenger of God with every breath he breathed, every glance of his eyes, and every step he walked. Ḥusayn was the living embodyment of the Message. He could not just sit idly by as the pure Islam of the Messenger of God was hijacked before his very eyes. Ḥusayn could not just watch quietly as a drunken womanizer who did not even pretend to be a believer became ruler of all the Muslims. Ḥusayn could not just look the other way as the Islamic leadership was abolished and a new dynasty of kings was forced upon the Muslims, against the laws of the Qurʾān, against the *sunnah* (practice) of the Prophet, and against wishes of the *jamāʿah* (majority). He continued to Kūfah. Ḥusayn also sent another messenger to Kūfah. Then, when there was no response, he sent another.

Yazīd's spies monitored Ḥusayn's movements every step of the way. The governor at Kūfah was concerned that if Ḥusayn arrived, the people's morale would rise and they would rally around him. He instituted a blockade around the city. No one was allowed in or out. When Ḥusayn's second messenger arrived, he was caught, tied up, beaten, and forced to go up to the top of the pulpit and to curse Ḥusayn and ʿAlī and to call them the "Liar and son of the Liar." The guards took him to the top of the pulpit, but instead he praised ʿAlī, the true Commander of the Faithful, and cursed Yazīd's governor. They took him to the top of the palace and threw him off

the roof, crashing down to his death. The same thing happened with the next messenger sent by Ḥusayn. The governor, still having only thirty guards with him, began to recruit an army with bribes, promises of gold, fertile land, and high positions. He also spread lies about Ḥusayn: that he was starting a rebellion, that Ḥusayn was going against the majority, that Ḥusayn wanted power for himself, and even that Ḥusayn was a Khārijī.[39] The governor recruited slaves, foreigners, and mercenaries who didn't know who Ḥusayn was and who would fight for money. The governor sent an advance group of 1,000 soldiers to intercept Ḥusayn and bring him to Kūfah as a prisoner.

The leader of this group was named Ḥurr (Free). They left the garrison at Kūfah and went out into the desert. They reached Ḥusayn's caravan. After the news of the killing of Muslim reached them and those who joined the caravan for reasons other than supporting Ḥusayn left, only a small group of people remained in the caravan. Now there were only Ḥusayn and the rest of the Prophet's family, Muḥammad's grandchildren and great-grandchildren, some members of his extended family, some of the Prophet's companions, and a few loyal others. All in all, 72 fighting-age men and their families continued to travel with Ḥusayn. Seeing the army of 1,000 troops approaching, Ḥusayn and his followers took defensive positions. Ḥurr separated from the rest of the troops, left the army behind him, and approached slowly. He addressed Ḥusayn respectfully. Ḥusayn responded in kind. Ḥurr asked if Ḥusayn came to fight. Ḥusayn said no. Ḥurr asked Ḥusayn what his intentions were. Ḥusayn addressed the entire gathering. He said that he was peacefully responding to the letters that were sent to him from Kūfah. He said that if the people of Kūfah changed their minds, he would return home to Madīnah. Ḥurr said he didn't know what letters Ḥusayn was talking about. Ḥusayn brought out sacks filled with letters. Ḥurr said he never wrote any letters. Again, Ḥusayn addressed the army and said that he came in response to their letters, but if they'd changed their minds, he would turn around and return home to Madīnah. No one answered. Ḥurr said that his orders were to arrest Ḥusayn and bring him to Yazīd's governor in Kūfah. Ḥusayn said that would never happen.

By this time, the sun was high in the sky. It was time for the noon prayer. Ḥusayn and the rest of the Prophet's family prepared for the prayer. They offered their water to whoever was thirsty or needed to wash. Ḥurr and his army dismounted. Those who did not have enough in their own

[39] Even today, the modern *shi'ah* of Muʿāwiyah still spread these same lies.

water-skins drank from the water of Ḥusayn and his family, and washed, and even watered their horses. One of the soldiers, obviously a fresh recruit, didn't even know how to water a horse. Ḥusayn watered the horse for him. When Ḥusayn was ready to pray, he asked Ḥurr if they were going to pray as one group or two separate groups. The entire army joined the family of Muḥammad and prayed behind Ḥusayn as he led the prayer. After the prayer, Ḥurr tried to come up with a temporary compromise. He suggested that Ḥusayn take some other path, neither towards Kūfah, nor towards Madīnah. Meanwhile, Ḥurr would send a message to the governor in Kūfah requesting further instructions. Ḥusayn and the Prophet's family and Companions started moving northward. Ḥurr and his army followed close behind. Ḥurr continued to try to convince Ḥusayn to submit as a prisoner and to warn Ḥusayn that he would be killed otherwise. Ḥusayn continued to preach to the army and to reminded them that he did not come to fight, only to answer the messages that were sent to him. After some time, they reached a patch of desert near the banks of the river Euphrates. A fast horse was coming towards them quickly from the direction of the garrison at Kūfah. When it reached them, the rider spoke his greetings to Ḥurr, but not to Ḥusayn. He delivered a message to Ḥurr from the governor: he was to stop Ḥusayn right away, no matter where they were, and not allow him or his people to move from that spot. One of Ḥusayn's companions, the son of a Companion of the Prophet, said to Ḥusayn that they should attack these troops while they can, before reinforcements come. Ḥusayn refused, saying that he would never start the fighting; he would only defend if attacked.

The companion was right. An even larger army was on its way. In Kūfah, Yazīd's governor bribed even more people and promised them vast amounts of gold, high government positions, and tracts of rich lands in the East. Even some of the Kūfans who wrote letters inviting Ḥusayn couldn't resist the temptation and joined the army to march against Ḥusayn. They wore veils under their helmets to cover their faces so no one would recognize them. More slaves, mercenaries, and foreign fighters who had no idea who Ḥusayn was, were recruited, armed, and sent against Ḥusayn. Some reports say as many as 10,000, or 50,000, or even 100,000 soldiers were in the army. Even if the highest numbers are exaggerated, the lowest number in any of the historical reports is 3,000 soldiers. Yazīd's governor needed a general to lead the troops. He chose the son of the founder of Kūfah, the son of one of the Companions of the Prophet. His family kept telling him to refuse, that whatever the governor promised him, it was not

worth selling his soul. But the governor offered a huge parcel of rich lands in the East. The new general accepted and led the motley crew of new recruits, slaves, and foreign mercenaries out of Kūfah towards Ḥusayn.

When they reached the place where the two groups were camped by the river, the picture looked grim. Ḥusayn's camp had only a few tents where his 72 followers and their families sheltered from the desert sun, and now the horizon was filled as far as the eye could see, with thousands of soldiers. The general dismounted and met with Ḥusayn. Again, Ḥusayn invited all to quench their thirst and to water their horses. Meanwhile, the general spoke with Ḥusayn. Ḥusayn repeated that he was only there to answer the letters sent to him from Kūfah. He repeated that if he was no longer welcome in Kūfah, he would go back home to Madīnah. The general sent a letter to the governor communicating Ḥusayn's offer. The governor responded that Ḥusayn must give his allegiance to Yazīd. Then he sent another message that Ḥusayn must give his allegiance directly to *him*, Yazīd's governor. Then he sent a message that Ḥusayn and his camp should be blocked from access to the water, just like those who surrounded ʿUthmān's house prevented ʿUthmān from any water. Ironically, the truth is that when ʿUthmān's house was surrounded by the angry mob, it was Ḥusayn and his brother Ḥasan who defended ʿUthmān and brought him water!

Ḥusayn and the general met multiple times over the course of the next few days. There were some minor skirmishes to try to break through to get water. The thirsty children's cries got louder every day. The adults got weaker and more thirsty every day. Passing soldiers called Ḥusayn names. They said he was a Khārijī. They said he was playing with religion. They said that he was rebeling against the Imām (Yazīd). They saw one of the companions of ʿUthmān on Ḥusayn's side and asked him why he was there supporting Ḥusayn. He explained to them that he was defending Muḥammad's faith and supporting Muḥammad's family, as the Prophet commanded and as the Qur'ān commands, while *they* were the army of evil who supported the wickedness and corruption that has taken over Muḥammad's community.

Ḥusayn realized that many of the people in the army either didn't know who he was, or were told lies about him, or were true believers who were lied to and were told that they were fighting enemies of Islam, or all of the above. He preached to the soldiers and reminded them that he was the grandson of the Messenger of God, the same one who grew up in the

Prophet's lap, and was carried on the Prophet's shoulders, the one who was hugged and kissed by the Messenger of God and the one about whom the Prophet said, "Ḥusayn is from me and I am from Ḥusayn." He reminded them that they invited him to Kūfah, asking him to come and be their *imām*. He brought out the sacks of letters and called out the names of the leaders of the tribes who wrote letters to him. He reminded them of the Qur'ān and of th *sunnah* (traditions) of his grandfather, the Prophet. He reminded them of the qur'ānic verses that were revealed about Muḥammad and his family. He reminded them of their Islamic duty towards the family of Muḥammad. He reminded them of how the enemies of Muḥammad who persecuted, starved, tortured, and killed the believers, and even tried to kill Muḥammad himself, eventually became governors and generals after the Prophet's death. He reminded them how the enemies of Islam, the same people who were cursed by the Prophet during his lifetime, obtained positions of power after Muḥammad's death. He reminded them how those same people who were enemies of Muḥammad became enemies of the Rightly Guided Caliph, 'Alī. He reminded them how those same people rebeled against him, and divided the community for their own advantage. He reminded them how those people spread corruption and that it was the duty of every Muslim to defend Islam from evil. He reminded them that there are no kings in Islam. The Qur'ān commands that leadership decisions must be made by *shūrá* (consultation) and that the decision of the *jamā'ah* (majority) must be respected. He reminded them that those were the reasons why they wrote letters inviting him in the first place.

Things went back and forth like this for a few days, with people in the army insulting Ḥusayn and the people who were with him, while Ḥusayn and his companions tried to expose the soldiers to the truth. On the 9th of the holy month of Muḥarram, the general got tired of waiting. The sun was getting lower and lower. He ordered the army to attack. Thousands of soldiers against 72 was not really a battle. Everyone knew how it was going to end. Ḥusayn told the general to stop! He said to the general to save the attack for the next day, so that the family of the Prophet and his Companions could spend the night reciting the Qur'ān and praying their final prayers in this world. The general wanted to get it over with, but his army said that even if infidels had made such a request, they would have been granted it. So, the general agreed to delay until the morning.

After the night prayer, Ḥusayn gathered all his followers. He released them from their pledges of allegiance to him and their promises to support

him. He told them that the army was only after him. The army was not after them. Tonight was their chance to escape. He urged them to save themselves and their families and sneak away under cover of darkness. He even blew out the candles so that no one could see who was leaving, so no one would feel ashamed or embarrased for wanting to save their own lives. Later, when the candles were lit again, everyone was still there. Not a single one of the 72 men or their families budged from their place. They knew that they were fighting for justice against the forces of evil. They knew they would be killed in the morning. They knew there was no chance of 72 brave warriors winning against an army of thousands. They swore they would fight with their last breath to defend Ḥusayn and the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* (practice) of Muḥammad, the Messenger of God. The tents in Ḥusayn's camp filled with prayer and the recitation of the Qur'ān. Meanwhile, in his palace in Syria, Yazīd drank wine and danced with disrobed women as he waited for news from Iraq.

The next day was filled with screams and crying even before the battle began. It was the 10th day of the holy month of Muḥarram, during which fighting is forbidden. Ḥusayn, the family of the Prophet, and the loyal companions, had been deprived of water for days. The same people who freely shared their water with the enemy troops in the desert heat, even watering the enemies' animals, were now deprived of water by the soldiers. The same Ḥusayn who brought water to 'Uthmān when he was surrounded and deprived of water, was now being banned from water in 'Uthmān's name! Truth had turned to falsehood and falsehood became truth. It was a difficult thing for the adults to bear, but it was impossible for the children. The 72 brave companions who chose to defend Muḥammad's pure Islam from corruption by the drunken womanizer who claimed to be king of Muslims, had their wives and children with them. The children suffered in the desert heat without any water. Their cries and screams filled the air.

Ḥusayn again called to the soldiers surrounding the camp. Again he reminded them of the Message and the Messenger of God. Again he reminded them of the Qur'ān and the sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet. Again he reminded them of the right and the wrong. Again he reminded them that he never started any rebellion; all he did was the same thing he has done all his life: call people to the Qur'ān and to the sunnah (traditions) of the Prophet. Again he reminded them that he was invited, and now that he arrived to accept the invitation, he was being killed. And for what? For insisting that the leader of Muslims must follow the Qur'ān and the sunnah

(practice) of the Prophet? For refusing to allow the Islamic caliphate to become a un-Islamic kingdom? For refusing to bow to an illigitimate ruler who was not chosen by the *jamāʿah* (community), but by a few of his father's cronies? For refusing to recognize an illegitimate claimant who gained "support" by bribing people with gold, government positions, and land? For refusing to acknowledge as leader of Muslims an unfit usurper who silenced opposition with death and threats of death? Were these Ḥusayn's crimes? Was he, the last remaining member of Muḥammad's immediate family, who was raised by Muḥamad himself, who witnessed the Qur'ān being revealed, and who lived the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet every day, being accused of un-Islamic behavior? Ḥusayn, who had Muḥammad's pure blood flowing in his veins… was it *ḥalāl* (permissible) for anyone to spill Muḥammad's blood from Ḥusayn's veins?

And even if the soldiers had no problem with that, were they really comfortable with stooping so low as to starve innocent children and keep thirsty children from water? Even if they believed that Ḥusayn was in the wrong, how could the soldiers believe that starving innocent children was right? Ḥusayn brought out his six month old baby boy, who had been crying so much from thirst that his voice was cracked. It was so silent in the desert heat that everyone heard the baby's parched cries. Ḥusayn held him up so all the soldiers could see and hear. Ḥusayn begged them. Even if they had no mercy for Ḥusayn or any of his followers, at least have mercy for this baby and let him have a sip to drink. The soldiers began to shift nervously. They knew that Ḥusayn was right. Murmurs could be heard in the ranks. The captain saw that the soldiers were starting to go soft. He ordered one of his mercenaries to shoot the baby. As Ḥusayn held the baby up in the air, a three pronged arrow swooshed through the air and struck right through the baby's heart. There was a small explosion of blood. The baby's cries went silent. Ḥusayn wailed aloud. Holding the baby in one hand, he cupped some of the baby's blood in his other hand and flung it to the sky. He called for God to witness the evil of these people and their masters. Ḥusayn used his sword to dig a small hole in the sand. He gently placed his baby son inside, prayed for him, and covered him with sand.

If it were not already obvious, the truth now became clear to everyone. Everyone now knew that the propaganda spread by Yazīd and his henchmen was lies. Ḥusayn was not a rebel. He was not going against the *jamāʿah* (majority). He was not making a grab for power. He was not going against the Qur'ān or the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet. He was not

going against the teachings of Islam. The exact opposite of those accusations was true. In fact, the truth is that Yazīd was the one doing all of those things. Yazīd was the rebel. Yazīd was going against the *jamāʿah* (majority). Yazīd was making a grab for power. Yazīd was going against the Qurʾān or the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet. Yazīd was going against the teachings of Islam and declaring himself a king. Ḥusayn was the living proof of all of these things. Ḥusayn's very existence was a threat to all the enemies of Muḥammad who joined Abū Sufyān and Muʿāwiyah and now sided with Yazīd. Yazīd needed Ḥusayn dead because Ḥusayn was the last living representative of the pure Islam of the Messenger of God. This army was not gathered to defend Islam from a rebellion by Ḥusayn. This army was gathered to protect Yazīd *from Islam*!

Ever since the reinforcements came, Ḥurr was uneasy. The last night was worse than ever. He was unable to sleep. He saw that Yazīd and his army were evil and un-Islamic. He realized for the first time that the people in the corrupt government now ruling the Muslims were actually the enemies of the Messenger of God and his message. He now understood that they did not just want Ḥusayn's allegiance. They wanted him dead. They were actually willing to spill the blood of the beloved grandson of Muḥammad for their own worldy pleasures, and they were going to convince Muslims that they were doing it in Muḥammad's name. Ḥurr felt guilty for intercepting Ḥusayn and for preventing him from returning to Madīnah. Ḥurr felt the weight of responsibility for Ḥusayn's pure blood being shed. He felt like he led Ḥusayn and the Prophet's family to slaughter. He felt the guilt of delivering them on a silver platter to their murderers. All night, Ḥurr begged God for forgiveness. He knew that he could never undo what he had done.

Now, Ḥurr spurred his horse as fast as he could towards Ḥusayn's camp. The Prophet's family, seeing the charge, feared it was an attack, but Ḥusayn calmed them. He knew it was not an enemy. When Ḥurr came, he came down from his horse, got on his hands and knees, and begged Ḥusayn's forgiveness. Ḥusayn said that he was expecting him, that he was now a guest of the family of the Messenger of God. Ḥusayn said that he and the entire family, including Muḥammad himself, forgive Ḥurr. Ḥusayn apologized that he had no water or food to offer his new guest, but that his company was welcome. Ḥurr was in tears. He begged Ḥusayn not to allow him to waste another moment. He begged to be allowed to fight the wicked army and be the first to die defending the family of the Prophet. Ḥusayn

tried to convince him otherwise, but Ḥurr insisted. In Arabic, the word *ḥurr* means 'free,' or 'One who has freedom.' Ḥusayn said to Ḥurr, "Your mother named you Ḥurr, and you are truly free." In other words, the soldiers in the army were slaves to gold, slaves to power and high positions, slaves to the pleasures of this life, but Ḥurr was free of those trappings. After receiving Ḥusayn's blessing, Ḥurr turned around and rode towards the army. He cursed them for their vile actions and showered blessings on the Messenger of God and his family. Ḥurr was an experienced warrior. He fought like a beast, killing at least two dozen men before being overcome and taken down. He was the first to be martyred battling the soldiers of Yazīd's army in defense of the family of the Messenger of God.

After Ḥurr, others lined up to receive Ḥusayn's blessing before their martyrdom. Some fought in single combat, daring anyone in the army who would accept their challenge. Sometimes the army rushed in as a group, whittling down Ḥusayn's supporters. One of Ḥusayn's supporters was a well-known ʿUthmānī (one of those who supported ʿUthmān). Some people in the army recognized him and asked what he was doing on Ḥusayn's side? He said that anyone who knows the Qur'ān and the traditions of the Messenger of God knows that Ḥusayn is in the right. They called him names and accused him of being a traitor. He said that *they* were the traitors to the Prophet of God, for daring to shed the blood of his blessed family and his beloved grandson. He fought bravely until he was killed. One by one, the companions of Ḥusayn asked for his blessing, before going out to fight until martyrdom.

John came to Ḥusayn. John was a devout Christian, and former slave. He was freed by one of the Companions of Muḥammad. After gaining his freedom, he joined ʿAlī and stayed with him until the end of ʿAlī's caliphate. After that, he joined Ḥasan. After Ḥasan was poisoned, he joined Ḥusayn and stayed with him as a close companion. The night before, Ḥusayn urged John to escape in the night. John refused. As a slave, John witnessed with his own eyes how Muḥammad's message of divine justice for the poor, for the disenfranchised, and for the slaves, was the same message that Jesus preached. John witnessed how the Message threatened the pagan elite, like Abū Sufyān and his family, who monopolized religion just to increase their own wealth and power. He saw that it was just like how the message of Jesus was a threat to the rich and powerful of Jesus's time. After he was freed and became ʿAlī's companion, John witnessed how Muʿāwiyah, the son of that unholy marriage between Abū Sufyān and the cannibal, manipulated the

believers, including ʿUthmān and ʿĀ'ishah, just for his own wealth and power. He witnessed how Muʿāwiyah instigated the civil wars, turned people against ʿAlī, then manipulated and poisoned Ḥasan. And now he was witnessing the grandson of that unholy marriage, the drunkard and tyrant son of Muʿāwiyah, claim to be the king of the believers. Even as a Christian, he knew that God and Heaven were on Ḥusayn's side. He wished to give his life in the way of God, rather than sell his soul to servants of the devil, the likes of Yazīd and his wicked family. Though John was now a gray haired old man who knew Ḥusayn as a baby in the Prophet's lap, he fought with the bravery of a young stallion until he fell. Even then, on the ground suffering from mortal blows, bleeding to death, and unable to fight any longer, his lips still moved, and he proclaimed his allegiance to the family of the Messenger of God. Until he was silenced by a blade.

One by one, the companions of Ḥusayn, some of them also Companions of the Prophet, asked for his blessing, before going out to fight until their deaths. Then the family of the Messenger of God began to go out. The cries and screams of the children were unbearable. Their voices cracked from thirst. Ḥusayn's brother, ʿAbbās, asked permission to try to break the seige and bring back water for the crying children. Ḥusayn knew that it was a dangerous mission and nearly impossible. He also knew that no warrior was more able, and no one more loyal, than his brother ʿAbbās. Their father, ʿAlī, married ʿAbbas's mother after the death of Ḥusayn's mother, Fāṭimah. ʿAbbās was Ḥusayn's right hand man. He stood by him at every turn. He was willing to give his life to defend Ḥusayn's. Just as his mother raised him to.

Now ʿAbbās slung some waterskins over his shoulder and prepared to head towards the river. The band of soldiers defending the water saw a horse and rider approaching and began to prepare themselves. They had no idea who they were about to deal with. ʿAbbās made a bee-line straight for the water. He cut the soldiers down left and right. They saw that it was ʿAbbās. They knew his reputation as a warrior. They scattered like frightened birds. At the shore, ʿAbbās got down from his horse and waded into the water. It was so hot and they were both so thirsty, the horse immediately dipped his muzzle into the water and began drinking. ʿAbbās scooped some water up in his cupped hands and bent forward to drink, then felt ashamed to quench his thirst while the children of the camp were crying of thirst and the Prophet's beloved grandson, Ḥusayn, was thirsty. He let the water slip between his fingers and fall back into the river. He filled the water

skins and got back on his horse to take the water back to the suffering children.

Meanwhile, the surviving soldiers who escaped ʿAbbās's sword earlier, called for reinforcements. ʿAbbās was now surrounded by more troops. Again, ʿAbbās fought fiercely. He cut down soldiers from all directions as he headed back towards the camp. The children's screams and cries got louder as he got closer. The nearer he approaced, the more he heard them, and the more zealously he fought the enemy, knowing that he would soon fulfill his mission and bring desperately needed water to the suffering children. He was so motivated that he was able to fight off dozens of soldiers at a time and still advance towards the camp. One of the soldiers realized why ʿAbbās's morale was so high. He took careful aim. Instead of aiming at ʿAbbās, he shot arrows at the water skins. The water poured out onto the desert sands. ʿAbbās's heart sank. He was so close to the camp. He almost delivered the water to the thirsty children whose throats were so parched they could not even scream normally. The children who were so dehydrated that they cried but couldn't form tears from their eyes. ʿAbbās couldn't bear the thought of returning empty handed. He turned around and faced the soldiers. He was surrounded on all sides. Now, knowing this was his last stand, he fought even more fiercely than before. The brave warrior defended Ḥusayn and struck fear in the hearts of Ḥusayn's enemies. Now ʿAbbās lashed out like a cornered lion. He struck down soldiers of Yazīd's army on the right and the left, in front of him and behind. He parried swords and spears, he struck shields, armor, and helmets. The weakness of men bought by gold and the glitter of this world was no match for the strength of a believer fighting in the way of God. The army scrambled all around him like prey in fear of a lion. A whirlwind of swords and spears mixed with a shower of arrows horses kicked up clouds of desert dust. An arrow struck ʿAbbās in the eye. His eyeball burst. Blood gushed. The shaft of the arrow lodged in the bone of his skull behind where the eyeball used to be. ʿAbbās couldn't see properly. He stopped swinging his sword for a moment. Using his other hand, he took hold of the arrow and yanked it out of the bone of his skull. Blood gushed out. It was difficult to see with all the blood pouring all over his face. Even though he stopped swinging his sword for just long enough to remove the arrow, it was long enough for the soldiers to land blows. They cut ʿAbbās's arm that was holding the sword. Having lost control of the arm, ʿAbbās quickly used his other arm to grab the sword from his right hand before his right arm fell to the ground. This, one of the

bravest of God's warriors, now with only one arm and one eye, and blood gushing from his skull and his shoulder, called "*Allāhu akbar!* (God is Greatest!)."He raised his sword in the arm he lad left and continued fighting the enemies of God. He cut down even more of Yazīd's minions. But he was no longer at his full ability. He was able to see only half his field of vision. He had only half his arms. He lost a great deal of blood and was still losing more blood. He was getting dizzy. Another blow cut his left arm and his sword fell to the ground. He fell from his horse. ʿAbbās called a final goodbye to his brother, the beloved grandson of the Messenger of God. The soldiers retreated as Ḥusayn rode to ʿAbbās. He held his brave, loyal brother one last time before ʿAbbās breathed his last breath.

One by one, Ḥusayn's loyal supporters were killed, then his close family were killed. All defended Ḥusayn, the only Muslim who had the courage to defend the Message of Islam against the evil and corrupt enemies of Muḥammad. Now, only Ḥusayn was left. With all his followers eliminated, the soldiers took aim at Ḥusayn himself. Again Ḥusayn reminded them who he was and who they were. Again he reminded them of the Qur'ān and God's commandments. Again he reminded them of the *sunnah* (traditions) of Muḥammad, his grandfather, who raised him from a baby on those traditions. He was the Ḥusayn about whom the Messenger of God said, "Ḥusayn is from me and I am from Ḥusayn." He reminded them that he was the fifth of the five people the Prophet called his close family He reminded them that the Qur'ān commands all believers to love Muḥammad's family. He was the Ḥusayn about whom the Messenger of God said, "God loves whoever loves Ḥusayn." All this they ignored.

The troops surrounded Ḥusayn and attacked him from all sides. He fought the last fight of a warrior who knew that he was moments away from martyrdom. He knew every swing of his blade, every gallop of his horse, every breath might be his last. Arrows rained on him. Spears pierced him. Swords slashed at him. He fell from his horse. He continued to swing his blade. The infantry surrounded him. They formed a circle, but didn't approach. He was pierced with dozens of wounds and bleeding into the sand. Arrows were still in him. He was cut and sliced and chopped. His chest still rose and fell with quick gasps for air. His eyes still moved. His body was still, but he glared at them. The unspoken curses of God and God's Messenger stared at them for what they had done to the beloved of Muḥammad.

The captain approached and yelled at the soldiers. Then he came forward himself. He sat on the chest of Muḥammad's beloved grandson, grabbed his hair in one hand, and with the other, took his dagger from his belt and cut off Ḥusayn's head. He raised the head for all to see like a trophy. The troops began looting Ḥusayn's belongings. One took his turban. Another took his sandals. One took his robe. They even took his underclothes! They tried to take his horse, but the horse kicked and reared defending his master, even killing some of the looting soldiers. When the horse returned to the women and children without Ḥusayn, everyone at the camp realized that the beloved Imām Ḥusayn was martyred. The wailing and screams and cries of the women and children pierced the heavens.

The looting soldiers now rushed the camp and began looting and pillaging the belongings of the women and children from among the family of the Prophet. They took their bracelets, necklaces, earrings, shoes, even the *ḥijāb*s (head coverings) from off their heads. When the captain came into Ḥusayn's tent, he saw the only surviving one of Ḥusayn's sons in the tent. Ḥusayn had three sons. When Muʿāwiyah chose to go against the *jamāʿah* (majority) and fight against the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī, among the many despicable and evil things Muʿāwiyah did, in addition to forcing people to curse ʿAlī and persecuting the supporters of ʿAlī, Muʿāwiyah banned the naming of any children ʿAlī. Ḥusayn deliberately named all three of his boys ʿAlī. They were known as ʿAlī the elder, ʿAli the younger, and the middle ʿAlī. The elder ʿAlī was killed in the battle defending his father. The younger ʿAlī was the baby who was killed by the arrow when Ḥusayn held up the baby, asking the troops to have mercy and allow some water for the innocent thirsty children. The middle ʿAlī was sick and bedridden. He was so dizzy and weak that when he tried to stand to join the battle he collapsed to the ground. Now the captain found him laying on the ground in the tent. He ordered that the boy be killed. His aunt, Ḥusayn's sister Zaynab, jumped in front and covered him with her body. She shamed the soldiers for trying to kill a boy, too young and too ill to even stand up, much less fight. She said if they were going to kill him, they would have to kill her first! The captain withdrew.

He returned to the battlefield where Ḥusayn's beheaded corpse lay. As if what he had already done to the beloved grandson of the Messenger of God were not enough, he ordered that the cavalry stampede their horses over the body. Back and forth, over and over, the horses' hooves trampled the already desecrated corpse until it was ripped to shreds. The women and

children wailed. After the troops looted their belongings, the women and children were tied up and taken prisoner. The decapitated head of the Muḥammad's beloved grandson was put on a spear. The army began a procession. The other heads were also displayed in front as the prisoners were dragged behind the cavalry. The family of the Prophet, the very people who God and His Messenger commanded us to love and honor and respect, were killed in the most vile manner, and now the surviving women and children of Muḥammad's family were being publicly humiliated. The heads and the prisoners were paraded in towns all along the river going northward up to Mosul, then eastwards along the Anatolian highlands towards Aleppo, then southward along the Mediterranean coast through Lebanon and towards Damascus in Syria. Over 1,000 kilometers the family of the Prophet were marched on foot, fettered, and humiliated.

In Damascus, Yazīd sat on his throne in his palace, dressed in silks and surrounded by gold and slaves. Yazīd gave gold coins and other rewards to the soldiers when they arrived. He ordered Ḥusayn's head brought to him. He stabbed the blessed head of the beloved of Muḥammad with a stick, saying that now he finally got revenge for the Battle of Badr [It was the first battle between Yazīd's grandfather, Abū Sufyān, against Muḥammad and the believers.] Some Companions of the Prophet who were present berated him, saying that they saw the Messenger of God kissing that head! Yazīd tried to pretend he was innocent, saying that he never wanted Ḥusayn killed. He blamed the general and the captain for killing Ḥusayn. But Yazīd's stabbing Ḥusayn's head with his stick was proof of his lies. Yazīd offered gold to ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, the only surviving male of the Prophet's family. Yazīd also offered him to stay in the palace at Damascus with him. ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn refused both. He said they all just want to go home to Madīnah.

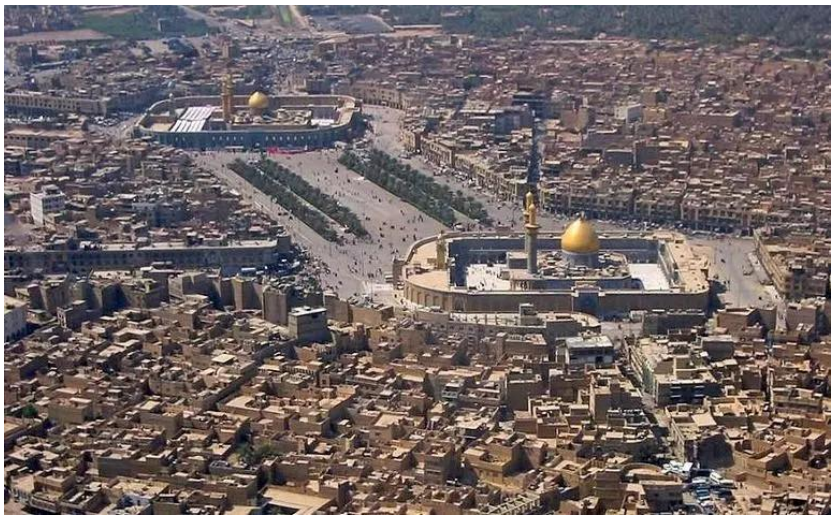
Yazīd's keeping them in the palace dungeon was proof of his lies. When it was time to go, the prisoners were rounded up again and marched away from Damascus. As they left the city, ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn asked the guards if they could take the long way back to Madīnah, so as to stop by Karbalā' again. They arrived on the 40th day after the Battle of Karbalā'.

Word of the massacre spread over all the Islamic lands. It was a scandal the likes of which Muslims had never before witnessed. Yazīd and his corrupt family claimed the caliphate against the will of the people. Many Companions of the Prophet refused to recognize Yazīd's claim to authority. There were other rebellions brewing. The Companions in Makkah and

Madīnah resisted Yazīd's treachery. Two years after the Battle of Karbalāʾ, the Anṣār and Muhājirūn of Madīnah battled against Yazīd's army at the Battle of Ḥarrah. Yazīd and his corrupt cronies slaughtered many hundreds of the Companions of the Prophet, then pillaged Madīnah for three days. Afterwards Yazīd's army brought with them catapults and continued to Makkah, where they bombed the holy Kaʿbah. They destroyed the holy sanctuary of God and slaughtered hundreds of Companions of the Messenger of God. Ḥusayn tried to warn the Muslim *ummah* (community), he warned that allowing Muʿāwiyah and Yazīd to change Islamic leadership into un-Islamic kingship would make all Muslims their slaves. And that is exactly what happened.

To this day, Yazīd is cursed on the tongues of Muslims from every *madhhab* (school of thought). No one even knows where his grave is. To this day, Ḥusayn is loved and respected by Muslims from every *madhhab* (school of thought) for having saved Islam. He defended the true Message of his grandfather, the Messenger of God, even with his last breath and the last drop of Muḥammad's blood that ran in his veins. He preserved the holy Qurʾān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of his grandfather, even at the cost of his own life. He never gave in to tyranny or oppression. He fought always for Truth and Justice until the very end. His burial place at Karbalāʾ is visited by millions of pilgrims every year, Sunnīs, Shīʿīs, and even non-Muslims, who come to pay their respects to this noble grandson of the Messenger of God, who gave his life to defend the pure teachings of Islam and the Qurʾān.

Believers in the Mosque of Ḥusayn, the grandson of Muḥammad, in Karbalā', Iraq, lined up in preparation for congregational prayer.



Aerial view of the Mosques of Ḥusayn (foreground) and his brother ʿAbbās (background).

ʿALĪ IBN ḤUSAYN, *ZAYN AL-ʿĀBIDIN* (THE ORNAMENT OF THE BELIEVERS)

Ḥusayn had three sons. Muʿāwiyah did many despicable and evil things that split apart the unity of Muslims. When Muʿāwiyah chose to go against the *jamāʿah* (majority consensus) and divided the Muslim community by fighting against the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī, Muʿāwiyah instituted many wicked innovations. In addition to establishing the practice of cursing ʿAlī from the pulpits of the Mosques and in the prayers, Muʿāwiyah forced people to curse ʿAlī and killed anyone who refused. He persecuted the supporters of ʿAlī in every way, threatening their persons, their families, and their properties. No one who supported ʿAlī was safe from Muʿāwiyah and his henchmen. Muʿāwiyah even went so far as to ban the naming of any children ʿAlī.

Ḥusayn deliberately named all three of his boys ʿAlī. They were known as ʿAlī the elder, ʿAli the younger, and the middle ʿAlī. The elder ʿAlī was killed in the battle defending his father. The younger ʿAlī was the months-old baby who was killed by the arrow when Ḥusayn held up the infant and asked the troops to have mercy and allow some water for the innocent thirsty children. The middle ʿAlī was sick and bedridden in the days leading up to the battle. He could hardly stand, much less fight. By the grace of God, and the protection of his aunt, Zaynab, his life was spared.

When the family of the Prophet returned to Madīnah, this ʿAlī, the last surviving male great-grandson of the Prophet, was recognized as the new patriarch of the family of Muḥammad. He dedicated his life to protecting the heritage of Muḥammad and his family, to preserving the Qurʾān, and to promoting the traditions of his great-grandfather, the Messenger of God. He was so pious and devoted so much of his time in prayer that he came to be known as "Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn," the Ornament of the Worshippers, or the best example for the believers. He spent so much time prostrating in prayer to God, with his forehead on the ground, that he was nicknamed "al-Sajjād," the prostrator. He spent his money buying the freedom of slaves. He bought and freed so many slaves that Madīnah was full of former slaves freed by ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn. He spent all day fasting and all night praying. His servants said they would would have no work to do, because they never brought him meals to eat during the day, and they never prepared his bed for him at night. He used to go out at night in disguise and secretly distribute food at

the homes of poor families. In the morning they would wake and see food at their doors, without knowing who left it. Only after he died, and the food deliveries stopped, did the people realize that ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn must have been the one who supplied the food. It was estimated that his charitable supply of food supported 200 poor families in Madīnah.

He is best known for his *duʿā*s (supplications). He spent so much time in prayer and was gifted with emotional and heartfelt calls to the Lord in prayer. Some of his *duʿā*s were written down by those who heard them and collected in a compliation that is called *al-Ṣaḥīfah al-Sajjādīyah*. It may be the earliest book of *duʿā*s in Islam. He was recognized as the most knowledgeable imām of his time by scholars such as al-Zuhrī and al-Shāfiʿī. Even though he avoided politics, his existence as the family of the Prophet and defender of Islam and the Qurʾān was a threat to wicked people who wished only to defend their wealth and power. ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, the great-grandson of Muḥammad, was poisoned by Walīd ibn ʿAbd al-Malik ibn Marwān, the great-grandson of the man cursed by the Prophet Muḥammad.

ʿAlī ibn Ḥusayn, the Ornament (as in, shining example) of the Worshippers, the best living example for the believers, died on 25th of Muharram in the 95th year after the Prophet's migration from Makkah to Madīnah (20th October, 713 CE). He was buried in the Baqīʿ cemetery, next to his uncle, Ḥasan, the beloved grandson of Muḥammad.

The grave of the Prophet's paternal uncle, ʿAbbās, along with the Prophet's grandson Ḥasan (see generation #2), ʿAlī the son of Ḥusayn (Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn), Muḥammad al-Bāqir (the great-great grandson of Muḥammad, and his son, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (the great-great-great grandson of Muḥammad and the teacher of both Imām Mālik ibn Anas, eponymous founder of the Mālikī school of thought, and Imām Abū Ḥanīfah, eponymous founder of the Ḥanafī school of thought).

THE SCANDAL

This was the story of the biggest scandal in the history of Islam. It is also one of the biggest scandals in the history of the world. Within only 50 years, the very same people who were the biggest enemies of Islam became the rulers of the Muslims. Within only 50 years, the very same people who were Muḥammad's worst enemies managed to hijack the pure Message that Muḥammad preached. Within only 50 years, the very same people who persecuted, starved, tortured, and killed Muḥammad's earliest and closest companions, claimed that *they* themselves were Muḥammad's companions. Within only 50 years, the traditions of the Prophet and the practices of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, were turned upside down and inside out. Muḥammad's once unified community was divided. His once pure faith was corrupted. The once legitimate method of leadership based on the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet, became an illegitimate rule based upon murder, assassination, threats, bribery, and deception. While once the leaders of the Muslims were humble and pious, living simple lifestyles in simple homes and devoted to God, now they were greedy, power-hungry kings who lived lavishly in palaces devoted to sensual pleasures. It is no accident that later Muslims came to call the first four caliphs the "Rightly Guided." That is because those who came after them were definitely not.

And, just like every other scandal in the history of the world, the perpetrators of the scandal did everything within their power to deflect blame away from themselves and onto others, to minimize the significance of their crimes, to divert attention, to create fake news, to spread misinformation, to deceive the public, and to blame the victims. The very same people who fought against Muḥammad and his early Companions were also the same people who were the cause of troubles after the Prophet's death. The very same people who were cursed by the Prophet in his lifetime took control of powerful government positions over Muslims after his death. The very same people who held ʿUthmān hostage when they were at war with the Prophet during his lifetime, made troubles for ʿUthmān when he became caliph. Those very same people who were the cause of ʿUthmān's troubles then instigated his murder and dragged their feet in coming to his defense. The very same people who deceived and manipulated ʿUthmān for their own benefit, did the same to ʿĀʾishah and put her life in danger. Those very same people conspired against ʿAlī when he became caliph and opposed ʿAlī when he insisted on ruling by the

Qurʾān and by the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet. The same people poisoned Ḥasan when he insisted that Muslims should be ruled by the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of his grandfather, the Prophet. And those same people massacred Ḥusayn and his loyal followers when Ḥusayn insisted that Muslims must be ruled by the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of his grandfather, the Prophet.

Within only 50 short years of the Prophet's death, the same gang of people who were Muḥammad's biggest enemies (Abū Sufyān and his friends, and their sons and grandsons) manged to hijack the beautiful message of *islām*. Within only 50 years, they managed to kill, one by one, the remaining members of the Prophet's immediate family, the ones who insisted on maintaining the pure message of the Qurʿān and the pure *sunnah* of the Messenger of God. Why? Because to people like them, nothing in the world is more dangerous than the true message of *islām*.

﴿ ٱلَّذِينَ يَنقُضُونَ عَهْدَ ٱللَّهِ مِنۢ بَعْدِ مِيثَٰقِهِۦ وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَآ أَمَرَ ٱللَّهُ بِهِۦٓ أَن يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِى ٱلْأَرْضِ ۚ أُو۟لَٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْخَٰسِرُونَ ﴾

"Those who break promises to God after a covenant is made, and who put a stop to that which God has commanded to continue, and who spread corruption throughout the Earth, they are the losers."

(Q. al-Baqarah, 2:27)

ISLAM IS A RELIGION OF JUSTICE

All of God's prophets preached the message of divine justice. Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muḥammad, and all the others from among God's many prophets, preached the same message *islam* (not Islam). It is no accident that most of those who were attracted to God's message of divine justice were the poor, the downtrodden, the enslaved… all the oppressed who suffered from a society based on injustice. And it is no accident that most of those who were against God's message were the rich, the powerful, the kings and ministers, the big businessmen, the bankers and money-lenders, the high ranking priests… all the people who benefited from a society based on injustice. This was just as true in Noah's society, as it was in Abraham's society, as it was in Egypt during Moses's time, in Palestine during Jesus's time, in Makkah during Muḥammad's time, and even today. In every society, in every era, the rich and powerful control their societies to ensure that the system keeps them rich and powerful or, even better, makes them richer and more powerful! Anything that comes along to change that, such as someone who claims God has sent him to establish justice and fairness and equality, is a dangerous threat to that system. That is why most of the believers who followed God's prophets, with only a few exceptions, were those who were suffering from injustice, and most of the enemies of God's prophets were those who profited and benefited from the injustice.

The story of Islam is no different. The early companions of the Prophet were attracted to the Prophet's message of justice for all, of caring for the poor, of helping the helpless, of protecting the orphans, defending the prisoners, and freeing the slaves. And for the exact same reasons that Makkah's poor, oppressed, helpless, orphans, prisoners, and slaves, were attracted to Muḥammad's message, those very same reasons made the greedy, rich, and powerful of Makkah enemies of Muḥammad's message. Muḥammad's enemies were his enemies because they were the ones who profited from the injustice that Muḥammad was preaching against. It is the very reason why Abū Sufyān, his cannibal wife, and the rest of Muʿāwiyah's family, were against Muḥammad and his message. It is the same reason why, after Muḥammad's death, the same group of people who were against Muḥammad and tried to kill him, continued to oppose Muḥammad's family and tried to kill them. It is the same reason why Muʿāwiyah and his family abused ʿUthmān's kindness while he was alive and then got him killed when he was no longer useful to them. It is the same reason why Muʿāwiyah was

against ʿAlī, who protected and defended the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet, who raised him. It is the same reason why Muʿāwiyah and his gang were against Ḥasan, who protected and defended the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of his grandfather, the Prophet, who showered him with love. It is the same reason why Muʿāwiyah's son, Yazīd, was against Ḥusayn, who protected and defended the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of his grandfather, the Prophet, who adored him. It is the same reason why Yazīd and the same gang of Muʿāwiyah's family were against the remaining companions who were still alive in Madīnah and Makkah, and the reason why that wicked gang didn't even hesitate to kill the companions and bomb the holy Kaʿbah.

Islam, and the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet are all about promoting justice and fighting against injustice. For anyone whose rule, or wealth, or position is based on injustice, there is nothing in the world more dangerous than the true *islām* of God's prophets. Justice is a theme repeated over and over again in the Qurʾān. The Qurʾān mentions justice (عدل) and its derivative forms 27 times. Even more dramatic is the Qurʾān's condemnation of injustice. The Qurʾān mentions injustice (ظلم) and its derivative forms over 300 times! One can hardly read a page of the Qurʾān without coming across a verse that commands justice or one that condemns injustice, or both.

﴿ أَلَا لَعْنَةُ اللَّهِ عَلَى الظَّالِمِينَ ﴾

"Are not the curses of God upon the unjust [people]?"
(Q, Hūd, 11:18)

The qurʾānic emphasis on justice and opposition to injustice are undeniably among the main foundations of God's message. The following are just a few of the many verses that highlight the importance of this theme.

﴿ وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ ٱللَّهَ غَٰفِلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ ٱلظَّٰلِمُونَ ﴾

"And do not think that God is unaware of what the unjust people do."
(Q, Ibrāhīm, 14:42)

﴿ ... ٱلْبِرَّ مَنْ ءَامَنَ بِٱللَّهِ وَٱلْيَوْمِ ٱلْـَٔاخِرِ وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةِ وَٱلْكِتَٰبِ وَٱلنَّبِيِّۦنَ وَ ءَاتَى ٱلْمَالَ عَلَىٰ حُبِّهِۦ ذَوِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَٱلْيَتَٰمَىٰ وَٱلْمَسَٰكِينَ وَٱبْنَ ٱلسَّبِيلِ وَ ٱلسَّآئِلِينَ وَفِى ٱلرِّقَابِ وَأَقَامَ ٱلصَّلَوٰةَ وَءَاتَى ٱلزَّكَوٰةَ وَٱلْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ... ﴾

"… righteousness is believing in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the prophets and giving money out of love for Him to [needy] relatives and to orphans and to the poor and to [needy] travelers in trouble and to beggars and to freeing the slaves and performing the prayers and paying charity and keeping promises..."

(Q, al-Baqarah, 2:177)

﴿ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِٱلْعَدْلِ وَٱلْإِحْسَٰنِ وَإِيتَآئِ ذِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ ٱلْفَحْشَآءِ وَٱلْمُنكَرِ وَٱلْبَغْىِ ۚ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

"Indeed, God commands justice and goodness, and giving to one's close relatives, and forbids shameful, abominable, wicked deeds.
He admonishes you so that you might contemplate."

(Q, al-Naḥl, 16:90)

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ كُونُواْ قَوَّٰمِينَ لِلَّهِ شُهَدَآءَ بِٱلْقِسْطِ ۖ وَلَا يَجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَـَٔانُ قَوْمٍ عَلَىٰٓ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُواْ ۚ ٱعْدِلُواْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَٱتَّقُواْ ٱللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ خَبِيرٌۢ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴾

"O, you who believe, stand firm for God as witnesses in fairness, and do not allow the hate of a people to make you behave unjustly. Be just! It is closer to the [righteous] fear of God. And fear God.
Indeed, God knows what you do."

(Q, al-Mā'idah, 5:8)

﴿ ... وَإِذَا قُلْتُمْ فَٱعْدِلُواْ وَلَوْ كَانَ ذَا قُرْبَىٰ
وَبِعَهْدِ ٱللَّهِ أَوْفُواْ ۚ ذَٰلِكُمْ وَصَّىٰكُم بِهِۦ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴾

"…and if you say something, speak justly [tell the truth],
even if it is against your own relatives, and keep your promises with God.
That is His command to you, so that you might contemplate."
(Q, al-Anʿām, 6:152)

﴿ وَنَضَعُ ٱلْمَوَٰزِينَ ٱلْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ ٱلْقِيَٰمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْـًٔا ۖ وَإِن
كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِّنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِنَا حَٰسِبِينَ ﴾

"And We will set up the scales of justice on the Day of Judgement and
no soul will be wronged for anything [it has done]. And even if it [the thing
done] was the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it [to light], and We
are good enough at keeping account [of everyone's actions]."
(Q, al-Anbiyāʾ, 21:47)

﴿ إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ ۖ
وَإِن تَكُ حَسَنَةً يُضَٰعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِن لَّدُنْهُ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا ﴾

"Indeed, God will not deal unjustly with even a [tiny] atom's worth,
and if it is a good deed, He will multiply it,
and give you, from what He has, a great reward."
(Q, al-Nisāʾ, 4:40)

﴿ مَن جَآءَ بِٱلْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُۥ عَشْرُ أَمْثَالِهَا ۖ وَمَن جَآءَ بِٱلسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَىٰٓ إِلَّا مِثْلَهَا وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴾

"And whoever brings about a good deed, will be rewarded ten times worth, and whoever brings about an evil deed will only be punished equal to it, and they will not be dealt with unjustly."

(Q, al-Anʿām, 6:160)

Muʿāwiyah succeeded in changing the Islamic caliphate into a dynastic succession of kings. He and his family ruled over Muslims for almost the next 100 years until the year 132 AH / 750 CE. They were so well known for their corruption and un-Islamic behavior that, even though they called themselves 'caliphs,' Muslim historians began calling Muʿāwiyah and those who came after him 'kings.' Muslim scholars even came up with the term 'Rightly Guided' to distinguish the caliphs before Muʿāwiyah from the corrupt and un-Islamic practices of Muʿāwiyah and his family.

The leadership of the Rightly Guided Caliphs was based on the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* (traditions) of the Prophet. The leadership of Muʿāwiyah and his family was based upon murder, assassination, threats, bribery, and deception. The succession of leadership from one Rightly Guided Caliph to the next was legitimized by *shūrá* (consultation with the people). Muʿāwiyah instituted dynastic kingship, which is illigitimate in Islam. The Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs were humble and pious, living simple lifestyles in simple homes and devoted their time to God. Muʿāwiyah and his family were greedy, power-hungry kings who lived lavishly in pleasure-palaces devoted to sensual pleasures and partook publicly in consumption of sinful intoxicants and other un-Islamic behaviors. The Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs imitated the practices of the earlier prophets and pious figures (Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus). Muʿāwiyah and his family imitated the kings and emperors of neighboring empires: they wanted palaces like theirs, armies like theirs, gold and silver coins like theirs, royal courts like theirs.

And this barbaric cannibal family's hatred for the family of Muḥammad never stopped. It was not bad enough that they tried to kill Muḥammad (multiple times) and succeeded in killing the children raised by Muḥammad and Khadījah. They continued the vile practice of cursing ʿAlī from the pulpits every Friday and in the *qunūt* (supplication) portion of the prayers. Now that they had full power over the entire Muslim caliphate, they controlled all of the mosques, all of the schools, all of the study circles, all of the libraries, all of the teachers and all of the students. Muʿāwiyah's family used everything at their disposal to make themselves look innocent of their crimes.

These perpetrators of this great injustice were very clever in diverting the blame away from themselves. The very same people who were

responsible for instigating the murder of ʿUthmān (and even boasted about it!) turned around and blamed ʿAlī for ʿUthmān's murder. The very same people who went against the *jamāʿah* and divided the community by refusing to give allegiance to ʿAlī turned around and blamed ʿAlī for dividing the community and going against the *jamāʿah*. The very same people who violated the Qurʾān and the traditions of the Prophet by changing Islamic leadership to a dynastic succession of kings accused Ḥusayn of violating the Qurʾān and the traditions of his grandfather. The very same people who made secret grabs for power against the will of the people and against the *jamāʿah* turned around and accused ʿAlī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn of going against the *jamāʿah*.

The perpetrators of this scandal, having at their disposal all the power in their new kingdom, used every possible method to divert the blame away from themselves and to distract people from the truth of history. There is no better example than what the new kings tried to do to erase the memory of Ḥusayn's stand for Islamic rule based on the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of his grandfather. The scandal of his murder is a painful memory for Muslims to this day. When people began to commemorate the day of Ḥusayn's martyrdom and recount the story of what happened at Karbalāʾ, the family of Abū Sufyān, Muʿāwiyah, and Yazīd did everything within their power to erase their own scandalous sins from history. They spread lies that Ḥusayn was rebeling against the majority. They spread lies that he was going against the *jamāʿah*. They spread lies and accused him of being a rebel, a usurper, a Khārijī. They tried to make Muʿāwiyah and Yazīd appear innocent by pointing the finger instead to the general of the army, or to the captain, or to the people of Kūfah who joined the army.

They concocted clever ways to counter the remembrance of Ḥusayn. They found some obscure reports that say the 10th of Muḥarram was the day when Adam was forgiven by God, the day when Noah's ark landed, and the day when Moses and the Israelites were saved from Pharaoh. They encouraged those reports and began to promote the day of Ḥusayn's murder as a day of celebration. They distributed sweets and called for joy and happiness. Because the series of incidents that led to the massacre actually began about 10 days before the massacre, when Ḥusayn was forced to flee Madīnah and then Makkah to prevent bloodshed there, those who loved and respected the Prophet and his family began to commemorate the massacre at the start of the month of Muḥarram. Since the month of Muḥarram is the first month of the Islamic calendar, the *shīʿah* of

Muʿāwiyah began the *bidʿah* (innovation) of celebrating the first of Muḥarram as "Islamic New Year." Again, doing everything possible to wipe the memory of the massacre and erase from history their horrific sins against the Prophet and his family, by distracting people from the truth and and manufacturing an innovated holiday of celebration. Neither the Prophet nor any of the Rightly Guided Caliphs ever celebrated "Islamic New Year."

With each confrontation, it was always the same group of people from the same families: one family fighting to save Islam and the pure *sunnah* of the Prophet from being corrupted, and another group doing everything possible to twist Islam to their advantage, to make themselves richer and more powerful. Generation after generation, Muḥammad and his blessed family were attacked and killed by the the very same group of wicked people who were Muḥammad's enemies in Makkah. The son of the cannibal attacked the boy that Muḥammad raised as his own son. The grandson of the cannibal attacked Muḥammad's beloved grandson. The perpetrators of the scandal were very skilled at manipulating unsuspecting people who didn't pay attention to history. They did everything they could to make sure that the true story was never told. Then they used clever deceptions to cover up the outrageous scandal and divert attention away from their own disgraceful crimes. There is no difference between the devious schemes of Abū Sufyān, Muʿāwiyah, and Yazīd back then and the tactics of deceptive politicians today. But, as God states in his Holy Book,

﴿ وَمَكَرُوا وَمَكَرَ اللَّهُ ۖ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ ﴾

"They scheme and plan, and God plans,
and God is the best of planners."
(Q, Āl ʿImrān, 3: 54)

THE HALF THAT HAS NEVER BEEN TOLD?

Imagine a small-time local politician today who wants to spread lies to make his enemies look bad and more lies to make himself look good. How difficult is that? Now imagine that small-time politician becomes president of the country. Now he controls the White House, the Congress, the Supreme Court, the Department of Education, the news channels, and social media. Now how easy is it for him to spread lies and make people think that lies are the truth and the truth is a lie?

That is exactly what happened in Islam over a thousand years ago. Just as today people spread fake news, back then Muʿāwiyah and his family spread fake ḥadīths. They spread outright lies to make themselves and Muʿāwiyah look good. Sometimes they twisted half-truths and spread them. For example, as Islam spread to lands far away from Makkah and Madīnah, there were many new Muslims who did not know much about Muḥammad, or Makkah, or Islam. So Muʿāwiyah's people would say things like "Muʿāwiyah was from Makkah!" and "Muʿāwiyah's family was from the same tribe as Muḥammad!" and "Muʿāwiyah was a companion of Muḥammad!" Of course, any new convert to Islam would think that was wonderful: Muʿāwiyah was from the holy city of Makkah, just like Muḥammad... Wow! And Muʿāwiyah was from the same tribe as Muḥammad... Amazing! And Muʿāwiyah and Muḥammad were companions... How excellent!

But the new converts were not told the other half of the story. There was only one major tribe in Makkah: the Quraysh tribe. Almost everyone from Makkah was from the tribe of Quraysh. The tribe of Quraysh in Makkah had many branches. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the from the branch that *was against* Muḥammad. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the people in Makkah who *boycotted and starved* Muḥammad and the Muslims of Makkah. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the people in Makkah who *tortured* the Muslims of Makkah. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the ones in Makkah who *killed* the Muslims of Makkah. Muʿāwiyah and his family were part of the group that *tried to assassinate* Muḥammad. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the reason Muḥammad had to escape Makkah and *run for his life* to Madīnah. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the people in Makkah who *warred against* Muḥammad in Madīnah and *tried to kill* Muḥammad (multiple times). Muʿāwiyah's father led the Makkans *against* Muḥammad. Muʿāwiyah himself fought in battle against Muḥammad. Muʿāwiyah's mother

cannibalized the liver of Muḥammad's uncle and protector, Ḥamzah. When Makkah was peacefully conquered by the Prophet, Muʿāwiyah's mother and father, were among the last anti-Muslims who finally gave their allegiance to the Prophet, reluctantly, only when they saw they had no choice, and even then, dared to say that they still did not believe he was the Messenger of God.

Even after the death of the Prophet, Muʿāwiyah continued to fight against the family of the Muḥammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Muʿāwiyah and his friends set up ʿUthmān to be killed. Muʿāwiyah and his friends tried to do the same to ʿĀ'ishah. Muʿāwiyah and his friends were the ones who went against the *jamāʿah* and refused to acknowledge the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī. Muʿāwiyah claimed that he himself was the Caliph! Muʿāwiyah and his friends were the ones who divided the Muslim community and gathered armies to attack the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī. Then, as they were about to lose the battle, Muʿāwiyah and his friends were the ones who cowardly hid behind pages of the Qurʾān to save their own lives. Muʿāwiyah and his friends were the ones who spread lies about the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī. Muʿāwiyah and his friends were the ones who instituted public cursing of the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī.[40] Muʿāwiyah and his friends went against the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Muʿāwiyah and his friends were the ones who persecuted, tortured, and killed the Muslims who were following the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet by obeying the Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī.

It's not that this half of the story has never been told. It is in the history books for all to see. But once Muʿāwiyah and his friends were in control of all Islam, they began to whitewash their tainted image by spreading fake ḥadiths. They encouraged and supported anything that made them look good. They promoted anything that distracted peoples' attention away from their horrific crimes against Islam, and away from the qurʿānic verses and Prophet's commands to love and protect the Prophet and his family.

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[40] This is well-attested in the historical literature. Some attempt to dismiss historical literature as inaccurate and insist that only ḥadīths are authentic. There are numerous accounts confirming this well-known aspect of Islamic history in the *ṣaḥīh* collections also. See: Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:120 #6373; Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsá al-Tirmidhī, *al-Sunan*, 7:120 #6373; Muslim ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 7:123 #6382; Muḥammad ibn Ismāʿīl al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 5:23 #3703 (summarized); Muḥammad ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, 15:368 #6925; Sulaymān ibn Aḥmad al-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʃam al-kabīr*, 5:451 #5746.

Among the many things that the new rulers did was to try to convince people that Muʿāwiyah was on the same level as the Rightly Guided Caliphs (even though he was the one who set up ʿUthmān to be murdered and who warred against ʿAlī). The new rulers tried to convince people that Muʿāwiyah and his family were *companions* of the Prophet (even though they were the ones who were his main enemies) The new rulers tried to convince people that Muʿāwiyah and his family were just as close to Muḥammad as Muḥammad's own flesh and blood family (who Muʿāwiyah and his family attacked and killed). Not only did the new rulers propagate the notion that Muʿāwiyah and his family were companions of the Prophet, and that these "companions" who repeatedly went against the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet were equal to the companions who followed the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet, but they also tried to convince people that Muʿāwiyah and his family were on the same level as the Prophet and his family.

After Yazīd's death, his son, Muʿāwiyah II, ruled for less than a year. When Muʿāwiyah II died, Marwān ibn Ḥakam (son of the man who was cursed by the Prophet and exiled from Madīnah by the Prophet, and who ran away to join Muʿāwiyah and became Muʿāwiyah's close companion), became ruler of all Muslims. His grandson, ʿUmar ibn ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ibn Marwān, became the eighth ruler of the Umayyah Dynasty established by Muʿāwiyah. Seeing how Muslims were cursing Muʿāwiyah (and his own family) for their un-Islamic practices just as the Muḥammad ﷺ himself had cursed them, this great-grandson of the man cursed by the Prophet ﷺ began the practice of saying the qurʿānic phrase

﴿ رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ ﴾

"God is pleased with them"

for Muʿāwiyah, his family, and all the Prophet's enemies who joined Muʿāwiyah and became Muʿāwiyah's companions. [41] This phrase is part of the qurʾānic verse

﴿ وَالسَّابِقُونَ الْأَوَّلُونَ مِنَ الْمُهَاجِرِينَ وَالْأَنصَارِ

[41] Ibn Taymīyah Aḥmad ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥalīm, *Minhāj al-sunnah*, 4:160; Abū al-Fidāʾ Ismāʿīl ibn ʿAlī, *al-Mukhtaṣar fī akhbār al-bashar*, 1:139.

وَالَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوهُم بِإِحْسَانٍ
رَّضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا عَنْهُ
وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي تَحْتَهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا
ذَٰلِكَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ ﴿

"The first and earliest [believers] from among
the Muhājirūn [those emigrated from Makkah to Madīnah] and
the Anṣar [those in Madīnah who welcomed the emigrants],
And those who followed them in doing good deeds,
God is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him,
He has prepared for them gardens underneath which rivers flow,
They will remain there for all eternity,
That is the great reward."
(Q, al-Tawbah, 9:100)

But Muʿāwiyah and his family were the exact *opposite* of what is described in this verse. Muʿāwiyah and his family were *the last* people to accept Islam. Muʿāwiyah and his family were the people who *persecuted, starved, tortured, and killed* the Muslims from Makkah (the Muhājirūn). In fact, Muʿāwiyah and his family were *the reason* that the Muhājirūn described in this verse were running away from Makkah for their lives in the first place! And even after Muʿāwiyah and his family joined the community of Muslims, how could they be considered "those who followed in doing good deeds" when their deeds were against the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet? Are spying on the Prophet, being cursed by the Prophet, and being exhiled from Madīnah by the Prophet, good deeds? Is instigating ʿUthmān's death a good deed? Is trying to get the Prophet's wife, ʿĀ'ishah, killed, a good deed? Is going against the *jamāʿah* by refusing to acknowledge the Rightly Guided Caliph a good deed? Is making people curse the Rightly Guided Caliph in the Friday sermons and in the daily prayers a good deed? Is gathering an army to fight the Rightly Guided Caliph a good deed? The Prophet made very clear that he (the Prophet) is against anyone who fights his family. Would the Prophet consider any of these things "good deeds?" Are any of these things deeds that God would evere be pleased with?

﴿ إِذَا جَآءَكَ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقُونَ قَالُوا۟ نَشْهَدُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُ ٱللَّهِ ۘ وَٱللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ إِنَّكَ لَرَسُولُهُۥ ۗ وَٱللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ إِنَّ ٱلْمُنَٰفِقِينَ لَكَٰذِبُونَ ﴾

"When the hypocrites come to you they say 'We bear witness that you are the messenger of God,' while God knows that you are His messenger, and God bears witness that the hypocrites are liars."
(Q, al-Munāfiqūn, 63:1)

Is it any surprise that the great-grandson of the man cursed by the Prophet tried to get people to stop cursing his own relatives, who were enemies of the Prophet and murderers of the Prophet's family? Is it any surprise that Muʿāwiyah's family and their allies tried everything they could to cover up their scandalous deeds and turn themselves into "companions" who did "good deeds" and that people should believe that "God is pleased" with them? Is it any surprise that they wanted desperately to keep the other half from being told?

﴿ وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ ٱفْتَرَىٰ عَلَى ٱللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴾

"And who is more unjust than those who make up lies against God?"
(Q, Hūd, 11:18)

ISLAM TODAY

As with any faith community, there are many different groups of Muslims. Today, the two main groups are called Sunnī and Shīʿī. Neither of these groups existed at the time of Muḥammad. Of course, both claim to be followers of the 'original' *sunnah* (tradition) of Muḥammad. Sunnīs today hold in very high esteem many of the Imāms of the Shīʿīs, including ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, Ḥassan and Ḥusayn, the two grandsons of the Prophet, and Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, the 5th generation grandson of the Prophet. Similarly, Shīʿīs today have tremendous respect for many of the closest companions of the Prophet, such as Bilāl, Salmān, and others who were among the earliest believers and who suffered the persecution, torture, and sometimes death, inflicted upon the early companions of the Prophet by the enemies of Islam. In other words, at the time of Muḥammad, there was no such thing as Sunnī or Shīʿī. All believers were simply 'Muslim.'

The word '*sunnah*' and its derivatives appear 17 times in the Qurʾān, usually in reference to the *sunnah* of God (e.g., Q, al-Fatḥ, 48:23) or the *sunnah* of those who came before (e.g., Q, al-Aḥzāb, 23:62). Its qurʾānic meaning is 'the way of…' or 'tradition of…' and similar meanings. The word '*shīʿah*' and its derivatives appear 12 times in the Qurʾān. Usually it means 'group,' or groups, such as members of the same team or tribe. For example, when Moses entered the city and saw two men fighting (Q, Qaṣaṣ, 28:15), the Qurʾān says that one of the men fighting was from Moses's *shīʿah* (the same group as Moses), and the other man fighting was not. Sometimes the word '*shīʿah*' means 'follower of…,' such as the verse that says Abraham was one of the *shīʿah* of Noah (Q, al-Ṣaffāt, 37:83). The meanings are similar, since all who follow the same person or thing are considered to be one group.

After the Prophet's death, when Muʿāwiyah went against the *jamāʿah* (majority consensus), refused to acknowledge ʿAlī as the Rightly Guided Caliph, commanded people to curse ʿAlī in sermons and prayers, and gathered armies to fight and kill ʿAlī, the people who supported Muʿāwiyah were called the *shīʿat Muʿāwiyah* (the followers of Muʿāwiyah) and the people who recognized that ʿAlī was the Rightly Guided Caliph, and the true guardian of the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet who raised him, were called the *shīʿat ʿAlī* (the followers of ʿAlī). Those who abused ʿUthmān and set up his murder, mostly governors and administrators who, like Muʿāwiyah, were children of Muḥammad's worst ememies in Makkah,

joined Muʿāwiyah and became the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah. The close companions of the Prophet, the earliest believers, and their children, many of whom suffered persecution, starvation, and torture at the hands of the very people who allied themselves with Muʿāwiyah, believed that ʿAlī (not Muʿāwiyah) followed the Qurʿān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. When ʿAlī, the Rightly Guided Caliph, known as the Commander of the Faithful, called them to join him in defending the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet, they gladly joined him and became the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī.

After ʿAlī's death, the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī continued to follow the Prophet's grandsons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn. They continued to believe that no one understood and lived by the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of Muḥammad better than Muḥammad's own family, those whom the Prophet himself raised in the Qurʾān and the *sunnah*. After Muʿāwiyah's death, the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah continued to follow Muʿāwiyah's son, Yazīd, for the same reasons that they followed Muʿāwiyah. After Yazīd's massacre of Ḥusayn and the remainder of the Prophet's family at Karbalāʾ, the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī realized just how low the family of Muʿāwiyah would stoop in their lust for worldly power. The family of the Prophet and the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī gave up any interest in government leadership and decided to focus instead on spiritual leadership and on preserving the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Three years later, at the Battle of Harrah, the rest of the companions in Makkah and Madīnah learned the same lesson: Yazīd's army attacked and killed hundreds of the companions of the Prophet, who were neither *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah nor *shīʿah* of ʿAlī, but insisted on justice, qurʾānic principles, and maintaining the *sunnah*. After massacring hundreds of the Prophet's companions and thousands of others, Yazīd's army then continued towards Makkah, beseiged the city, and bombed the holy Kaʿbah. After Yazīd, the family of Muʿāwiyah continued to cling to power, violently crushing all opposition. Since Muʿāwiyah first claimed power, he and his family ruled Islamdom as the Umayyah Dynasty for nearly a hundred years. In the year 132/750, their dynasty was overthrown by the ʿAbbāsī revolution. The surviving Umayyah descendants of Muʿāwiyah's family ran away to the furthest edge of Islamdom and established themselves in Spain.

During the next few centuries is when most of what we now call 'Islam' began to form.[42] The famous ḥadīth books were written by scholars such as al-Bukhārī (d. 256/870) and Muslim (d. 261/875) and the famous Qurʾān *tafsīr* (exegesis) books were written by scholars such as al-Ṭabarī (d.

[42] For a closer look, see *Our Faith*, a forthcoming publication from SJL Press.

310/923) and others. It is in this period that many famous scholars, such as Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), and al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820), and Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal (d. 241/855) lived, taught, and wrote their scholarly works. There were many such scholars, who had their own teachings and disagreed with the teachings of the other scholars. Each of these scholars had students and disciples who believed in their approach to Islam. In those early centuries, there were many different groups of Muslims. Regardless of which group they affiliated with, there has never been anyone who claimed to be Muslim but refused to believe in the Qur'ān or follow the *sunnah* (the way of, the practice of) the Prophet Muḥammad. Then, as now, the differences between various Muslim groups came from disagreements about how qur'ānic verses are interpreted, and which reports of the Prophet's *sunnah* they believed to be authentic. Around 300-400 years after Muḥammad, even though they disagreed with each other's teachings, the followers of the of the four famous scholars mentioned above began to agree that only their four teachers were legitimate authorities of religious teachings. These are the groups that eventually came to be called 'Sunnī.'

Meanwhile, the *shīʿah* of ʿAlī continued to follow the teachings of the family of the Prophet. They also continued to preserve the *sunnah* of the Prophet in their scholarly works. The only difference between the ḥadīth collections of the groups that now call themselves Sunnī and the group that is called Shīʿī is that Sunnī ḥadīth books include transmissions sourced from many different companions of the Prophet, while Shīʿī ḥadīth books accept transmissions only from the family of the Prophet. Both Sunnī and Shīʿī ḥadīth books contain many of the same ḥadīths, just reported by different transmitters. This should not be surprizing. The Prophet was an important figure. He was often surrounded by many people. When he said or did something noticeable, it was likely to be witnessed both by members of his family and by his close companions.

Even as different schools of thought were developing, all Muslims (except for the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah) continued to love the Prophet and his family. Mālik ibn Anas (d. 179/795), and Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767) studied with the sixth Shīʿī Imām, Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765), and narrated ḥadīths from him. He was the great-great-great-grandson of Muḥammad, the Prophet's direct descendant from the line of the Prophet's daughter, Fāṭimah. He was also related to the first Rightly Guided Caliph, Abū Bakr, from his mother's side, and to the fourth Rightly Guided Caliph, ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib, from his father's side. Muslim ibn Ḥajjāj (d. 261/875), in his

Saḥīḥ Muslim, includes many authentic transmissions narrated from him and from others among the family of the Prophet. The scholar al-Shāfiʿī (d. 204/820) was well-known for his love of the Prophet's family. This famous Sunnī scholar so proudly publicised his love for the family of the Prophet that he was even accused of being Shīʿī. He was brought before a government tribunal for a trial and there was an inquisition. He composed a poem stating, "If love of the Family of Muḥammad is heresy, then I am a heretic!"[43]

As the centuries passed, the different schools of thought continued to diverge from each other, but the love of Muḥammad and his family remained a universal characteristic held by *all Muslims*. And it still is, to this day. The family of Muḥammad is reserved a special place not held by any other human beings, with the exception of Abraham and his family. Five times every day, in every prayer, Muslims ask God to shower peace and blessings on Muḥammad *and the family of Muḥammad*. Love of Muḥammad and his family is not a Sunnī thing or a Shīʿī thing. It is a *Muslim* thing.

There are many authentic hadīths in which the Prophet commanded his followers to love his family, because it is commanded by God in the Qurʾān:

﴿ قُل لَّآ أَسۡـَٔلُكُمۡ عَلَيۡهِ أَجۡرًا إِلَّا ٱلۡمَوَدَّةَ فِي ٱلۡقُرۡبَىٰ ﴾

"Say, I do not ask from you any reward for it
other than the love of my family."
(Q. al-Shūrá, 42:23)

[43] Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Shāfiʿī, *Dīwan al-Shāfiʿī*, ed. Emil Badīʿ Yaʿqūb (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1316/1996), 93, poem 84. Translated here as 'heretic', Sunnīs often use the Arabic word *rāfiḍī* in place of Shīʿī.

THE *SUNNAH* OF THE MESSENGER OF GOD ﷺ

The following are ḥadīths of the Prophet, narrated from al-Bukhārī, Muslim, and other *Ṣaḥīḥ* books. They were presented earlier in this story, in the section on Muḥammad ﷺ , with full source citations. Now at the end, having come full circle, the ḥadīths are repeated here for emphasis.

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "A servant does not truly believe until he loves me more than his own self and my family more than his own family..."

The Messenger God ﷺ also said, "I swear by God, anyone who does not love my family, both for the sake of God and because they are my relatives, has not truly believed."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said: "Love God for the blessings He has nourished you with. Love me for the love of God, and love my family for my love."

The Prophet ﷺ looked at ʿAlī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Fāṭimah and said: "Whoever fights you, I will fight them; whoever is at peace with you, I will be at peace with them."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Fāṭimah is a part of me; whoever harms her, harms me."

The Prophet ﷺ called ʿAlī "Someone who loves God and His messenger, and someone whom God and His messenger love…"

Salmān said: I heard the Messenger of God ﷺ say: "Whoever loves ʿAlī has loved me; and whoever harbors hatred toward ʿAlī has harbored hatred toward me."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said to ʿAlī: "You are to me as Hārūn [Aaron] was to Mūsá [Moses], except that there is no prophet after me…"

The Messenger of God ﷺ said to ʿAlī: "You are from me, and I am from you."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Whoever hurts ʿAlī has hurt me."

The Messenger of God ﷺ said, "Whoever curses ʿAlī has cursed me."

The Prophet ﷺ also has other sayings about how only evil people will curse ʿAlī.

The Prophet ﷺ used to carry [Ḥasan] on his shoulders and say "O, God, I love him, so You love him too."

The Prophet ﷺ used to hug Ḥasan in his arms and say, "Whoever loves me, love him [Ḥasan] also."

The Prophet ﷺ hugged and kissed Ḥusayn and would say, "Ḥusayn is from me, and I am from Ḥusayn. God loves whoever loves Ḥusayn."

The holy Qur'ān commands the Prophet to remind all believers of the exceptional status of his family, and that all other things the believers do, they do for God, but the one and only thing that the Prophet asks the believers to do for him (the Prophet), is to love his family.

﴿ قُل لَّآ أَسْـَٔلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا ٱلْمَوَدَّةَ فِى ٱلْقُرْبَىٰ ﴾

"Say, I do not ask from you any reward for it
other than the love of my family."
(Q, al-Shūrá, 42:23)

It is no coincidence that *all* Muslims, regardless of their group affiliations, when they pray their ritual prayers, they say in each prayer: "O, God, send blessings upon Muḥammad *and the family of Muḥammad*." The command to love the family of Muḥammad is universally accepted in Islam. And the Messenger of God has made it very clear that anyone who makes his family happy, makes *him* happy, and anyone who harms his family, causes *him* harm. So who can call themselves Muslim when they ignore the Prophet's command to love Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥāsan, and Ḥusayn? And who can call themselves Muslim when they do nothing to defend Fāṭimah, ʿAlī, Ḥāsan, and Ḥusayn from those who would do them harm?

The Qur'ān establishes loving the family of Muḥammad as a commandment from God. The Prophet himself established loving his family as his *sunnah*. This means that, before leaving this world, the Messenger of God entrusted us with the love of his family.

The Holy Qur'ān states,

﴿ يَٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُواْ لَا تَخُونُواْ ٱللَّهَ وَٱلرَّسُولَ وَتَخُونُوٓاْ أَمَٰنَٰتِكُمْ وَأَنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

"O, you who believe! Do not betray God and His Messenger, knowingly betraying what you were entrusted with."
(Q, al-Anfāl, 8:27)

THE *SHĪʿAH* OF MUʿĀWIYAH

The *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah are still among us today, though they never call themselves the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah. Just as they did over a thousand years ago, today they infiltrate the majority Muslim community and pose as defenders of the Qurʿān and the *sunnah*, while their actions are the opposite of both the Qurʿān and the *sunnah*. Just as they did then, today they still hide behind the Qurʾān to disguise themselves. It is easy to tell who they are because they do the same things today that the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did more than a thousand years ago. And that is exactly why they do not want you to learn the history of Islam: because once you know, you will be able to see behind their disguise.

Just as *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did then, today they still minimize, dismiss, and ignore the commands of the Qurʾān and the commands of the Prophet to love and support his family. They caution against loving the Prophet "too much." Just as the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did over a thousand years ago, today they continue to minimize or even dismiss the high station and special status assigned by God to the Prophet's family. They continue to fool people into believing that the family of the Prophet are just 'companions' like any other companions. Just as the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did then, today they continue to make Muʿāwiyah look like a saint and a beloved 'companion' of the Prophet. Today's *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah try to cover up Muʿāwiyah's attacks on Muḥammad during the Prophet's lifetime, and his attacks on Muḥammad's family after the Prophet's death. They never mention that Muʿāwiyah and his family were the very last people to join the Muslim community, only once they saw that everyone else was already Muslim. Just as the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did over a thousand years ago, today they still try to make people believe that Muʿāwiyah and his family were 'companions' of the Prophet just like the Prophet's true companions. They never mention that Muʿāwiyah and his family were the ones who starved, perecuted, tortured, and killed the true companions of the Prophet. Just as the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did over a thousand years ago, today they continue to attack the family of the Prophet and their followers, who believe that ʿAlī (not Muʿāwiyah) was the Rightly Guided Caliph who followed the Qurʾān and the *sunnah* of the Prophet. Just as the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did then, they never mention the fact that Muʿāwiyah was the one who broke away from the *jamāʿah* and rebeled against the Rightly Guided Caliph. Just as they did then, today the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah continue to blame ʿAlī and his followers

for breaking away from the Qurʾān, from the *sunnah* of the Prophet, and from the *jamāʿah*, when in fact, it is they, the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah, who did (and still do) all of those things. Just as the *shīʿah* of Muʿāwiyah did over a thousand years ago, today they continue to divide the Muslim community while blaming the truthful for dividing the community. Just as they did then, today they claim the truth is a lie and try to turn lies into truth.

﴿ إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِى ٱلْكَذِبَ ٱلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِـَٔايَـٰتِ ٱللَّهِ
وَأُو۟لَـٰٓئِكَ هُمُ ٱلْكَـٰذِبُونَ ﴾

"Indeed, those who do not believe in the signs of God
accuse [others] of lying, while *they* are the liars."
(Q, al-Naḥl, 16:110)

AFTERWORD

Sadly, the *Story of Islam* is a true story. But please don't take my word for it. And don't take anyone else's word for it, either. Look into the original sources yourself, and you'll find that what you've read here is accurate.

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ALI J. HUSSAIN received his Ph.D. from the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago. He is a Fulbright fellow and has studied Arabic language at the University of Damascus. Having taught at colleges and universities throughout the midwestern United States and Canada, he has retired from academia, but continues to research and publish in areas of his specialty.

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